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Four Comedies
By Carlo Goldoni



Carlo Goldoni.

CARLO GOLDONI
from a contemporary engraving

*This edition is limited to five hundred
copies, of which this is number 43*

Signed

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'P. M. ...', written over a dotted line.

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FOUR COMEDIES

By
CARLO GOLDONI
Edited by CLIFFORD BAX



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To
HAVELOCK ELLIS

NO. 1000
ANNALS

Lemuel Donahoe

ADDRESS TO THE READER

GENTLE READER,

DURING the last year of the war I had among my colleagues, in a certain mysterious department, a gallant Major who was devoted to Virgil and Catullus. Often, when we were on night duty, we took our hasty lunch in a special café at two or three in the morning; and I shall always remember with admiration how zealously, even at those hours and by those darkened lights, he construed Catullus for my benefit while the yawning waitress was ordering our poached eggs.

That will show you the man he was, make you realize how gladly, when the war was over, I accepted his invitation to dinner, and perhaps enable you to share my subsequent astonishment. For after dinner the Major lit his cigar and said, 'Now tell me what you've been writing since the Armistice broke up our Happy Family?'

'As a matter of fact,' I answered, 'I have just translated a delightful comedy by Goldoni.'

'Ah,' said the Major, 'and when shall we see it acted?'

'Ah,' said I—'when!'

The Major meditated for a moment. Then, looking up blandly, he asked 'Who *is* Goldoni? A Japanese?'

You, Gentle Reader, may well know more than I about Goldoni; but lest, like the Major, you have found such pleasure in Virgil and Catullus that (until you bought this book—for I trust you not to have borrowed it) you had never been curious to learn something of our modern upstart authors, I hasten to declare that Carlo Goldoni was no Japanese; that he was, in fact, a Venetian, and that he lived from 1707 to 1793. If, when you have read these comedies, you desire to shake hands with him, buy the two volumes of his 'Mémoires.*' He wrote them in French when he was

Published (in French, with notes in Italian) by Barbèra, Florence.

close upon eighty and had been living for twenty-five years in Paris. Howells, in his introduction to an American translation, says, with good cause, 'I doubt if in the whole range of autobiography one can find anything of a cheerfuller sweetness.' This quotation I extract from a book that I recommend as an alternative or a supplement—'Goldoni' by H. C. Chatfield-Taylor (Chatto and Windus). Like so many of the most delightful books, it is—fortunately—a 'remainder,' so that by acting promptly to the hint you will be able to pick it up for a song. Meanwhile, I will take from these two books a few facts of Goldoni's life.

Grandfather Goldoni was a wealthy and jovial man. His joviality, indeed, dispersed his wealth; with the result that Father Goldoni, although he never went in rags, had to work for his living and, in the event, became a doctor. He was, too, so enthusiastic a lover of the theatre that he presented his four-year-old son with a private puppet-show. Our Goldoni—Carlo the playwright—profited, as we should expect, by this encouragement and, at the age of eleven, wrote a comedy. In spite of 'puerilities' (to which he refers in the 'Mémoires') it must have shown some surprising 'flashes of wit,' for a neighbouring lawyer refused to believe that it was Carlo's unaided work. When he was twelve he made his first appearance as an actor, playing a female part, and 'speaking the prologue so successfully that he was nearly blinded by a bushel of sugar-plums.' His talent as an actor, however, was not great. Indeed, in his early youth he had all the makings of a ne'er-do-weel. From his first school he ran away with a company of strolling players; and in 'The Impresario from Smyrna' you will find, I think, some recollections of that company,—in particular of the ladies with their cats and dogs and parrots. From his second school he was expelled for having written a satire on some worthy townfolk. A little later he saw a priest, who was charged with indecency, about to be executed in public, and the sight impressed him so strongly that he scrutinized his life, reproached himself for his love-affairs (which had been almost continuous) and

resolved to become a Capuchin monk. Father Goldoni, not at all perturbed, took his son for a fortnight to the Venetian theatres. The cure was radical. Carlo, instead of becoming a monk, became a barrister; but his mind remained in the theatre. He had already discovered 'that there was an English, a Spanish, and a French drama, but no Italian drama,' and, 'wishing passionately to see his country rise to the level of others,' he determined to give Italy the foundations of a new dramatic literature. Apart from a chain of adventures with soubrettes, before whom he was powerless, the rest of his life displays the brilliant and steady achievement of this purpose.

He had undertaken a big task. He had set himself to overthrow a tough-rooted tradition. He was at war with the famous *Commedia dell'Arte*. For although she had little dramatic literature, all Italy buzzed with plays. An author devised a plot and pinned it somewhere in the wings of the theatre. The comedians perused it, learned the names by which they were to address each other, and then, supported by a few set speeches for given situations, walked on to the stage and improvised the dialogue. The persons in these plays had long ago solidified into types, and the actors presented them in conventional masks. Goldoni's theatre, like Molière's, arose from this ancient tradition; and intermittently throughout the long pageant of his dramatic works (they number about three hundred) its familiar figures recur—Harlequin now turning a toe, Pantaloon now wagging a beard. Some critics, indeed, consider that in 'The Fan' (one of our plays) the old types attain their perfection. In effect, however, Goldoni—striving against violent and protracted opposition—hunted these puppets from the stage and replaced them with figures drawn from life.

When he migrated to France, at the age of fifty-five, he was a playwright of international fame; and in Paris he enjoyed the patronage of the King, became Italian tutor to the royal children, was acquainted with Rousseau (of whom he gives a terrifying description), and found in Voltaire a

staunch and admiring friend. Before he died the Revolution had burst; but all through his life he had written so discreetly that his political opinions are still a matter of dispute. Perhaps he had none. Perhaps he watched life without taking sides.

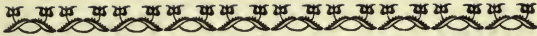
Several writers (among them, Casanova) have named him 'the Italian Molière.' Mr. Chatfield-Tayler feels that they do him a disservice, and most people, I suppose, would agree. I cannot take it upon myself in turn to defend him from this title because I have derived more pleasure from Goldoni than from Molière; nor can I institute here a comparison of their merits, for I think Mr. Palmer is calling out 'Hold—enough!' If defence be necessary we should remember that he himself once said 'The best of my plays is not worth the poorest of Molière's.' In the course, too, of a postcard correspondence engendered by this book one of my collaborators let fall the remark, 'Goldoni's material is always rather thin.' To say 'always' is to say too much, but certainly it is often slight—so slight that only an expert craftsman could have maintained our interest in its development. 'The Impresario,' I surmise, might be chosen as an example; but with what dexterity he manipulates that light material, twisting it into a hundred quaint forms, and extracting from it the utmost of its potential fun! Gold can be hammered so thin that a breath would blow it away; but a goldsmith knows his job.

Again, it is true that these comedies are a hundred and fifty years old, and true also, I fear, that to most people literature is merely one of the fashions. Unlike the Major, these readers cannot greatly enjoy a book that does not treat of contemporary questions and record the transitory objects of their period. Others, however, will agree with Swinburne that 'in literature there is no Past'; and Goldoni's plays have such vivacity, good-humour and fertility of fancy that you, I hope, are about to enjoy this book as keenly as we, who translated the plays, have enjoyed the making of it.

CLIFFORD BAX.

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MINE HOSTESS

A COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS



First produced in
Venice during the
Carnival of 1753

Translated by CLIFFORD BAX



PERSONS IN THE COMEDY

THE MARQUIS OF FORLIPOPOLI.

THE COUNT OF ALBAFIORITA.

FABRIZIO, *a Servant in the Inn.*

THE KNIGHT OF RIPAFRATTA.

MIRANDOLINA, *Keeper of the Inn.*

THE KNIGHT'S SERVANT.

ORTENSIA, *a Comedy Actress.*

DEJANIRA, *another.*


THE COUNT'S SERVANT.

THE SCENE IS FLORENCE
AT MIRANDOLINA'S INN

PERIOD, 1753

M = FOR
C = ALBA
K = RIP

M = FOR
C = ALBA
K = RIP



MINE HOSTESS

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

A Room in the Inn.

(Present, the MARQUIS OF FORLIPOPOLI and the
COUNT OF ALBAFIORITA.)

Marquis. Between you and me there is a social difference.

Count. But here at the inn my money is worth as much
as yours.

Marquis. Still, the special favours which our hostess bestows
upon me are better suited to my position than to yours.

Count. Why?

Marquis. I am the Marquis of Forlipopoli.

Count. And I the Count of Albafiorita.

Marquis. Count—yes. A purchased County.

Count. I purchased my County when you sold your
Marquisate.

Marquis. Enough! I am who I am, and I ought to be
respected. †

Count. And who has been lacking in respect? You yourself
—in speaking with too much licence of—

Marquis. I am here at this inn because I love the hostess.
Everybody knows that, and everybody ought to respect a
young woman who is pleasing to me. †

Count. Oh, that's all very well. You want to prevent me
from loving Mirandolina. But what, do you suppose, has
brought me to Florence? Why, do you suppose, am I at
this inn?

Marquis. Well, anyway, you won't succeed. †

Count. I shan't and you will?

Marquis. I shall and you won't. I am who I am.
Mirandolina requires my protection.

Count. It's not protection that she needs but money.

Marquis. Money? There's plenty of that.

Count. I myself spend a guinea a day here, Marquis—apart from continual presents.

Marquis. I spend—I shan't say how much.

Count. You won't say, but every one knows.

Marquis. They don't know all.

Count. Oh yes, Marquis—they do. The servants tell. One and sixpence a day.

Marquis. About the servants—there's that fellow Fabrizioo. I don't like him at all. I fancy that our hostess regards him with a much too favourable eye.

Count. Perhaps she intends to marry him. It wouldn't be a bad thing, either. Six months have gone since her father died, and a young woman alone in charge of an inn may get herself involved. For my part, I've promised her three hundred pounds when she marries.

Marquis. If she does marry, I'll be her protector, and I'll—I know what I'll do.

Count. Look here—let's act like good friends. Let's each give her three hundred pounds.

Marquis. What I do I shall do in secret, and make no parade of it. I am who I am. (*Calling.*) Ho! Any one there?

Count. (A ruined man—penniless and proud:)

SCENE TWO

(Those present and FABRIZIO.)

Fabrizio (to Marquis). Sir, at your service.

Marquis. 'Sir'? Who taught you the peerage?

Fabrizio. I beg your pardon.

Count (to Fabrizioo). Tell me, how is our hostess?

Fabrizio. She is well, your lordship.

Marquis. And has she yet risen?

Fabrizio. Yes, your lordship.

Marquis. Idiot!

Fabrizio. Why, your lordship?

Marquis. What does it mean, this 'lordship'?

Fabrizio. It's the title that I have conferred upon this other gentleman.

Marquis. Between his station and mine there is a certain difference.

Count (to Fabrizio). You see?

Fabrizio (to Count). True. There *is* a difference. Give me a Count.

Marquis. Bid the hostess attend me. I have something to say to her.

Fabrizio. Very good, your grace. Am I wrong this time?

Marquis. That will serve. You have known it for three months, but you're an impertinent fellow.

Fabrizio. Certainly, your grace.

Count. Can't you realize the difference between the Marquis and me?

Fabrizio. How, sir?

Count. Why, here's a guinea. Now get another from him.

Fabrizio. Thank you, my lord. *(To the Marquis.)* Your grace—

Marquis. Oh, I don't throw away my guineas like a fool. Get along.

Fabrizio (to Count). May heaven bless you, my noble lord. Your grace . . . (Empty! If you want to be well served outside your own country, what you need is not titles but cash.) *(Exit.)*

SCENE THREE

(The MARQUIS and the COUNT.)

Marquis. You think to outdo me with your gifts, but you'll achieve nothing. My rank is worth all your money.

Count. I don't value a thing by what it is worth, but by what it can buy.

Marquis. Buy away till you break your neck. Mirandolina thinks nothing of you.

Count. And for all your big title, d'you expect she'll think much of you? It's money does it.

Marquis. Money! No—protection. To be ready to do a kindness at need.

Count. To be ready to lend a hundred florins at need!

Marquis. One must be able to command respect.

Count. If you've plenty of money, everybody respects you.

Marquis. You don't know what you're talking about.

Count. A good deal better than you!

SCENE FOUR

(Those present and the KNIGHT OF RIPAFRATTA, coming from his room.)

Knight. My friends, what's the meaning of all this noise? Some dispute between you?

Count. We're debating a very nice point.

Marquis. The Count denies the value of rank.

Count. I never touched on the value of rank. I maintained, rather, that if one wishes to avoid annoyance one must have money.

Knight. Really, my dear Marquis—

Marquis. Come, let us change the subject.

Knight. But how did you ever arrive at such an argument?

Count. From the silliest starting-point possible.

Marquis. There! The Count finds everything silly.

Count. The Marquis loves our hostess. I love her still more. He hopes to win some response as a tribute to his rank: I, as a reward for my attentions. Doesn't it seem to you a silly argument?

Marquis. He would need to realize the care with which I protect her.

Count. He protects her, I spoil her.

Knight. Why, it's really quite impossible to choose between you. What! Let a woman worry you? Let a woman

upset you? A woman? I'll never come to that! A woman! But I'm in no danger, for to be upset by a woman is to be upset by nothing. I've never liked them, never held them to be of any account. I've always maintained that woman is an insufferable nuisance to man.

Marquis. However that may be, Mirandolina is something quite out of the ordinary.

Count. The Marquis is right there. The hostess of our inn is really adorable.

Marquis. You can judge that she is remarkable by the fact that I love her.

Knight. Really, you make me laugh. And what is this exceptional quality that distinguishes her from other women?

Marquis. She has a fine air that's enchanting.

Count. She's beautiful, she speaks well, and she dresses both neatly and in the very best taste.

Knight. All points that are not worth a fig! I've been at this inn for three days, and she's made no impression on *me*.

Count. Look at her well, and perhaps you'll notice something.

Knight. Absurd! I *have* looked at her well. She's a woman like all the rest.

Marquis. Not like all the rest. She has something else. I have associated with the finest ladies, but I have never found a woman who combines charm with modesty as she does.

Count. Why, good gracious me! I've always consorted with women, and I know their defects and their frailties; and yet, notwithstanding my courtship and all the expense that she has caused me, I have not been able even to touch her hand.

Knight. Coquetry, consummate coquetry. Poor fools! You're taken in, eh? That wouldn't work with me. Women? They're all like that.

Count. Have you never been in love?

Knight. Never; and never shall be. They raised the devil to make me marry, but I never would.

Marquis. But you are the only representative of your family. Don't you want an heir?

Knight. I have thought of that often, but all of a sudden my desire evaporates when I consider that in order to have sons it is necessary to put up with a woman.

Count. What shall you do with your fortune?

Knight. Enjoy the little that I have—among my friends.

Marquis. Splendid, sir, splendid—we'll enjoy it!

Count. And you mean to give nothing to women?

Knight. Absolutely nothing. They're certainly not going to eat me up!

Count. Look—there's our hostess. Now, tell me, isn't she adorable?

Knight. Oh, just fine. As for me, I'd value a good sporting dog four times as much.

Marquis. You may not esteem her, but I do.

Knight. I'd leave her to you were she lovelier than Venus.

SCENE FIVE

(Those present and MIRANDOLINA.)

Mirandolina. Gentlemen, my respects! Which of you was asking for me?

Marquis. I was—but I didn't mean here.

Mirandolina. Where would you have me, your Excellency?

Marquis. In my room.

Mirandolina. In your room? If you lack for anything, the valet will see to it.

Marquis (to Knight). What say you of this demureness?

Knight. Demureness, you call it. I should say brazen impertinence.

Count. My dear Mirandolina, I will address you in public, not putting you to the trouble of coming to my room. Observe these earrings. Do you like them?

Mirandolina. They're lovely.

Count. And you realize that they're diamonds?

Mirandolina. Of course. I know diamonds well enough.

Count. They are at your disposal.

Knight (softly, to the Count). My dear fellow—you're flinging them away.

Mirandolina. But why, sir, should you think of giving them to me?

Marquis. A fine present indeed! She has others that are twice as beautiful.

Count. These have been set according to the newest fashion. I beg you to accept them with my love.


Knight. (How crazy!)

Mirandolina. No, sir—really . . .

Count. If you refuse them I shall be annoyed.


Mirandolina. I don't know what to say. . . . I always try to keep the good-will of the visitors to my house. In order not to annoy you, Count, I will accept them!

Knight. (Ropes and gibbets!)

Count. Now, what do you say of such an obliging spirit? 

Knight. Obliging, forsooth! She'll eat you up without even thanking you.

Marquis. Well, Count, you've done a fine thing and no mistake, giving a present to a woman in public, just for vanity. *Mirandolina*, I want to speak to you *tête à tête*, between ourselves. I am a nobleman.

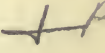
Mirandolina. (The dry tree! They don't drop from him!) Well, gentlemen, if you need nothing else I'll be going. 

Knight. Stay, hostess! That linen you brought me doesn't please me at all. If you can't do better I'll see to it myself.

Mirandolina. Oh, sir, it shall be put right. You shall be well served—but I should have thought that a gentleman might have spoken about it a little more politely.

Knight. When I pay good money I don't pay compliments also.

Count. Bear with him. He is the sworn enemy of women.

Knight. Indeed, I have no wish whatever that she should 'bear' with me. 

Mirandolina. Poor women! What have they done to you? Why are you so hot against us, sir?

Knight. That's quite enough. Don't try to be more familiar

with me. Get my linen changed. I'll send it along by my man. Good friends, at your service! (Exit).

SCENE SIX

(The MARQUIS, the COUNT, and MIRANDOLINA.)

Mirandolina. What a savage! I never saw his like.

Count. Dear Mirandolina—not every one knows your worth.

Mirandolina. Really, his unpleasant behaviour upsets me so much that I'll get rid of him immediately.

Marquis. Good; and if he won't go, just tell me, and I'll make him clear out at once. You have only to avail yourself of my protection.

Count. And as for any money that you may lose by this, I'll put that right—I'll refund you the lot. (And if you'll get rid of the Marquis too, I'll cover *that* expense.)

Mirandolina. Thank you, gentlemen, thank you. I've spirit enough to tell a stranger that I don't want him, and as a pretext I shall say that there is no unoccupied room in the house.

SCENE SEVEN

(Those present and FABRIZIO.)

Fabrizio (to the Count). Your lordship, there's some one inquiring for you.

Count. D'you know who it is?

Fabrizio. I fancy he's a jeweller. (*Aside to Mirandolina.*)

Mirandolina, I think you had better not stay here. (Exit.)

Count. It's true—he wants to show me a stone. Mirandolina, I should like to match these earrings.

Mirandolina. Oh, Count—no, no. . . .

Count. Is there anything that you don't deserve? And as for money, I don't care a rap for it. I'll go and see this jewel. Good-bye, Mirandolina. Marquis—till we meet! (Exit.)

SCENE EIGHT

(The MARQUIS and MIRANDOLINA.)

Marquis. (This damn'd Count! He bores me to death with his money.)

Mirandolina. Really, the Count takes too much trouble.

Marquis. Some people, if they've only sixpence in the world, will spend it on vanity and display. I know them: I know the way of the world.

Mirandolina. And so do I.

Marquis. They think that women like you can be overcome by mere presents.

Mirandolina. Oh, presents don't do us any harm.

Marquis. If I sought to put you under an obligation to me by making gifts to you I should feel that I had done you an injury.

Mirandolina. You have never done me an injury, Marquis.

Marquis. And such injuries I never will.

Mirandolina. I'm quite sure of that.

Marquis. In what I *may* do, I am yours to command.

Mirandolina. I should have to know, then, what it is that your Excellency *may* do.

Marquis. Anything. Try me.

Mirandolina. For instance . . . what?

Marquis. Gad! You have an amazing charm!

Mirandolina. Oh, thank you, your Excellency.

Marquis. I could almost commit an absurdity. I could almost curse my title.

Mirandolina. But why, sir?

Marquis. Sometimes I wish I were in the Count's position.

Mirandolina. Because of his money, perhaps?

Marquis. What? Money? I don't care a fig for his money.

If I were a silly Count like him——

Mirandolina. What would you do?

Marquis. Devil take me—I'd marry you!

(Exit.)

SCENE NINE

(MIRANDOLINA alone.)

Mirandolina. What a thing to say! The high and mighty Marquis Drytree would marry me, would he? And yet, were he ever so eager to marry me there'd be a certain little impediment. I wouldn't take him. I like cooked meat, but I've small use for the smoke. If I had married every one who has asked me I should now have a great many husbands. As many as come to the inn fall straightway in love with me and begin to pine; and what a number of them propose to marry me on the spot! But this Knight—he's as rude as a bear, and how uncivilly he treats me! He's the first visitor who has stopped at the inn and hasn't been glad to deal with me. I don't say that every one of them is in love with me at first sight, but to despise me like that! It does make me frightfully cross. A woman-hater? Won't look at them? Poor fool! He has not yet encountered the woman who knows how to make him look at her. But he will, he will. Who knows, he may have met her already? With him for a foeman I'll draw my blade. Men who run after me annoy me in no time. High rank is of no use to me. (As for wealth, I value it and I don't value it. My pleasure is to see myself served, sighed for, adored.) That's my little weakness, and it's the weakness of almost all women. I never think about marrying. I don't need any one. I live honestly, and I enjoy my freedom. I consort with every one, and fall in love with nobody. I mean to amuse myself with the fantastic contortions of all these lovers; and I mean to use every art to overcome, beat down, and utterly subdue those hard and uncivilized hearts which are inimical to us, us women who are the best thing that good Mother Nature has ever brought into the world.

SCENE TEN

(MIRANDOLINA and FABRIZIO.)

Fabrizio. Oh,—mistress!

Mirandolina. What is it?

Fabrizio. That guest who is lodging in the middle room complains of his linen—says that it's poor, and that he won't accept it.

Mirandolina. I know, I know. He told me too, and I should like to oblige him.

Fabrizio. Very good. Come with me and put out the things that I'm to give him.

Mirandolina. Go along. I'll take them in myself.

Fabrizio. You—take them to him yourself?

Mirandolina. Yes, yes.

Fabrizio. That means you think a lot of him.

Mirandolina. I think a lot of them all. Not a word more.

Fabrizio. (I knew it. We shall come to nothing. She plays with me, and we shall come to nothing.)

Mirandolina. (Poor booby! He, too, has hopes. And since he serves me so faithfully, I'll keep him hoping.)

Fabrizio. It's always been understood that *I* should look after the customers.

Mirandolina. You are just a little bit too off-hand with them.

Fabrizio. And you are just a little bit too obliging.

Mirandolina. I know what I'm doing, and I don't require a teacher.

Fabrizio. Very well, then. Provide yourself with another valet!

Mirandolina. Why—Signor Fabrizio—are you angry with me?

Fabrizio. You remember what your father said to us two before he died?

Mirandolina. Yes. When I mean to marry, I'll remember what my father said.

Fabrizio. But I'm a sensitive plant, and there are some things that I just can't stand.

Mirandolina. Why, what do you take me for? A feather-brain? A flirt? A simpleton? I'm surprised at you. What would you have me do with my customers—keep them or lose them? If I treat them well, I do so in my own interest—to maintain the good name of my inn. I don't want presents—and *one* is enough for love-making, and he's not far to seek. I know desert when I find it, and I know the man who suits me. And when I come to marry—I'll remember my father. Whoever serves me well shall have nothing to complain of. I'm a grateful person. I appreciate true worth . . . but I'm not appreciated myself. There, Fabrizio—understand me if you can. (Exit.)

Fabrizio. It's a clever man indeed who could understand her. Now she seems to want me, and now she seems not to want me. She says that she's no featherhead, but she acts like one. I don't know what to think. We'll see. I'm fond of her, I wish well to her, and in fact I'd gladly combine my interests with hers for the length of my life. Well, I shall have to shut one eye, and let things run their course. Anyway, these customers come and go; I remain always. I shall always have the best of it. (Exit.)

SCENE ELEVEN

The Knight's Room

(The KNIGHT and his SERVANT.)

Servant. They have brought you this letter, sir.

Knight. Bring me my chocolate. (Exit Servant.)

Knight (*opens the letter*). 'Siena, January the first, 1753'—who is it writing?—'My dear friend, the tender friendship which binds me to you urges me to inform you that your return home is imperative. Count Manna is dead. . . .' Poor Knight! I'm sorry. 'He has left his only marriageable daughter the heiress to one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. All your friends are eager to see such a fortune

attached to you, and are busying themselves. . . .’ Let them worry—for I don’t mean to know anything about it. Besides, they’re aware that I don’t want women at any price. And this good fellow, who knows it better than any one, pesters me worse than all the rest. What are a hundred and fifty thousand pounds to me? While I am alone, I can well do with less. If I were in harness even a bigger sum would not be sufficient. A wife for me! Sooner a quartan fever!

SCENE TWELVE •

(The KNIGHT and the MARQUIS.)

Marquis. Ah, my friend! Shall I disturb you if I come here for a little?

Knight. You will do me an honour.

Marquis. You and I at least can talk confidentially. That blackguardly Count is not worthy to converse with us.

Knight. Excuse me, my dear Marquis—one must respect others if one wishes to be respected. *

Marquis. Why, you know my disposition. I treat every one with courtesy, but as for him—well, I just can’t stomach the fellow.

Knight. You can’t stomach him because he’s your rival in love. Shame on you! A nobleman of your condition to be in love with an innkeeper! A clever man like you to run at the heels of a woman! *

Marquis. My dear Knight, she has simply enchained me.

Knight. But how crazy! How feeble! What are these chains? And what does it mean that women never chain me? Their charms consist in their beguilements, their blandishments, and the man who keeps away from them, as I do, stands in no danger of getting himself bewitched.

Marquis. Well, I agree and I don’t agree. But what’s putting me out, what’s worrying me, is my country steward.

Knight. He’s played you some dirty trick?

Marquis. I don’t know what to call it.

SCENE THIRTEEN

(Those present, and the KNIGHT'S SERVANT, with a cup of chocolate.)

Knight. Dear me, dear me. Bring another at once.

Servant. There's no more in the house to-day, sir.

Knight. They must get some. (*To the Marquis.*) If you will condescend——

Marquis (*takes the chocolate and without ceremony begins to drink it, then discourses and drinks alternately as follows*).

This steward of mine, as I told you . . . (*drinks*).

Knight. (And I have to go without.)

Marquis. Promised to send me, in addition to the usual sums . . . (*drinks*) twenty guineas. (*Drinks.*)

Knight. (Now comes the second thrust!)

Marquis. And he hasn't sent them. (*Drinks.*)

Knight. He'll send them some other time.

Marquis. The point is . . . the point is. . . . (*Finishes the chocolate.*) Listen. (*Gives the cup to the Servant.*) The point is that I am a good deal in debt, and I don't know what to do.

Knight. A week more or less . . .

Marquis. But you, being a man of quality, know what keeping one's word means. I am in debt; and . . . Zounds! if I got at Providence!

Knight. I'm sorry to see you so upset. (How can I get out of it decently?)

Marquis. Would it be difficult for you to be so kind—just for a week——

Knight. My dear Marquis, if I could do you a service, I should do it with all my heart; if I had them, you should see them here at once. I'm expecting them, but I haven't any.

Marquis. You don't mean to tell me that you're quite without funds?

Knight. See for yourself. Here's my whole fortune. It comes to less than two guineas. (*Shows a guinea and some small coins.*)

Marquis. That one's a guinea piece.

Knight. Yes—the last. I have no more.

Marquis. Lend me that, and I'll see in the meantime——

Knight. But then I shall——

Marquis. What are you afraid of? I shall pay it back.

Knight. There's no more to say . . . help yourself. (*Gives him the guinea.*)

Marquis. I have some pressing business—my dear friend.
For the present—thanks! We shall meet again at supper.

(*He takes the guinea, and exit.*)

SCENE FOURTEEN

(The KNIGHT alone.)

Knight. Splendid! The Marquis wanted to fleece me of twenty guineas, and he's satisfied himself with one. A guinea doesn't ruin me, anyway, and if he fails to pay it back I shan't be drained dry. I'm much more annoyed that he drank my chocolate. What manners! But then, I am who I am, I am a nobleman. A most genteel nobleman!

SCENE FIFTEEN

(The KNIGHT and MIRANDOLINA with the linen.)

Mirandolina (*entering, with some hesitancy*). May I, sir . . . ?

Knight (*brusquely*). What do you want?

Mirandolina (*coming forward a little*). Here is some better linen.

Knight. Good. Put it there.

Mirandolina. May I ask you just to see if it is as you wish?

Knight. What's the material?

Mirandolina. The sheets are cambric.

Knight. Cambric?

Mirandolina. At ten shillings a yard, sir.

Knight. I wasn't aiming at that. All I wanted was something better than what you gave me.

Mirandolina. I made this linen for persons of importance—people who can appreciate it; so I give it gladly to such a customer. I shouldn't give it out to another.

Knight. 'Such a customer!' The usual blarney!

Mirandolina. Have you noticed the tablecloth?

Knight. Oh, but these Flanders cloths deteriorate badly when they're washed. There's no need to get them soiled for me.

Mirandolina. In dealing with a gentleman of such quality I never consider these trifles. I have several of these cloths, and I shall use them for your Excellency.

Knight. (There's no denying that she's a most obliging woman.)

Mirandolina. (He really does seem to find women distasteful.)

Knight. Give the linen to my man, or set it down over there. You needn't bother yourself.

Mirandolina. But I couldn't be bothered in the service of a gentleman of such desert.

Knight. Good, good. There's nothing else. (The creature wants to flatter me. Women! They're all like that.)

Mirandolina. I'll put it in the cupboard.

Knight. Just where you please.

Mirandolina. (What a tough nut! I'm afraid I shan't get anywhere with him!)

(*She goes to dispose of the linen.*)

Knight. (Fools hear these pretty speeches, believe in the person who speaks them, and are straightway done for.)

Mirandolina (*returning without the linen*). What will you order for supper?

Knight. I'll take what there is.

Mirandolina. But I must know what you like. If there's anything that you specially like, don't hesitate to tell me.

Knight. If I want anything I'll tell the valet.

Mirandolina. But in such matters men haven't the care and patience that we women have. If you'd relish a ragout or something highly seasoned, pray be so good as to inform me.

Knight. Thanks. But it's not in such ways that you'll do to me what you've done to the Count and the Marquis.

Mirandolina. And what do you say to the silliness of those two gentlemen? They come to lodge at the inn and immediately begin to make love to the landlady. We've other things to think of than to connive at their absurdities. We try to look after our own interests, and if we exchange a few pleasant words with them we do so for the good of the house. As for me, when I see them flattering themselves, I just laugh like mad.

Knight. Excellent! I like your frankness.

Mirandolina. Oh, I've nothing to recommend me except my frankness.

Knight. Still, you know how to play-act with your suitors.

Mirandolina. I—play-act? Heaven keep me from that!

Those two gentlemen who torment themselves about me—ask *them* if I ever gave them one token of affection, ever dallied with them in any way that might give them grounds for flattering themselves. I don't quite rebuff them because that wouldn't be in my own interests, but I go almost as far. I can hardly bear the sight of such ninnies. And then, too, I hate women who run after men. You see? I'm not a schoolgirl. I'm getting on. I'm not handsome, but I've had some good chances. Still, I've never wanted to marry because I value my freedom so highly.

Knight. Well, it's true—freedom's a great treasure.

Mirandolina. And such a lot of people lose it so stupidly.

Knight. But I know what I'm about. I keep my eyes open.

Mirandolina. You have a wife, sir?

Knight. Heaven preserve me! I want no women.

Mirandolina. Splendid! Stick to that always. Women, sir—but it ill becomes *me* to speak badly of them.

Knight. Indeed, you're the first woman I ever heard talk like this.

Mirandolina. Oh, I tell you, we innkeepers observe and hear many things, and I sympathize with men who are afraid of our sex.

Knight. (She's an odd one!)

Mirandolina (offering to go). With your permission, sir . . .

Knight. Must you go?

Mirandolina. I don't want to be a nuisance.

Knight. Not at all. You please me. You amuse me.

Mirandolina. Now you see, sir? I'm just like this with the others. I dally a minute or two, I show a certain buoyancy, I pass a few little pleasantries for their amusement, and hey presto! they suppose . . . you understand . . . and begin to languish for me.

Knight. That's because you have pretty manners.

Mirandolina (with a curtsey). Oh, you're too kind, sir.

Knight. And they fall in love?

Mirandolina. Just think—how absurd! All of a sudden to fall in love with a woman!

Knight. I could never understand that.

Mirandolina. How resolute! How masculine!

Knight. Such folly! Poor silly mankind!

Mirandolina. That's the true estimate of man! Pray, sir, give me your hand.

Knight. Why d'you want me to give you my hand?

Mirandolina. Please do—if I am worthy. You see that mine's clean.

Knight. Well, here then.

Mirandolina. This is the first time that I've had the honour to take the hand of a man who thinks rightly about men.

(She takes his hand.)

really as a man

Knight. There—that's enough.

Mirandolina. Why, if I'd taken the hand of either of those mawkish gentlemen he would have supposed that I was crazy about him. He'd have swooned. I wouldn't let them take the smallest liberty with me, not for the world. They don't know how to treat life. Oh, how delightful it is to converse freely, without fencing, without *arrière pensée*, without all those ridiculous tomfooleries! Sir, pray pardon my forwardness. Please command me with authority in anything in which I can serve you, and I

will give to you that attention which I have never given to any one in the world.

Knight. What is your reason for favouring me so highly?

Mirandolina. It is because—apart from your deserts, apart from your rank—I feel sure that at least with you I can behave openly, without a suspicion that you might turn my attentions to some bad use, and that you will always regard me as a servant and not annoy me with silly pretensions and affected extravagances. ✕

Knight. (What fantastic devil possesses her I don't understand.)

Mirandolina. (Little by little the satyr is becoming domesticated!) ✕

Knight. Well, if you've got things to do, don't delay for me.

Mirandolina. Yes, sir, I am going to see about the affairs of the household. They are my passion and my pastime. If

ERRATUM

Page 20, line 26. 'thinks rightly about men'
should read 'thinks really as a man.'

in love before to-morrow!)

(Exit.) ✕

SCENE SIXTEEN

(The KNIGHT alone.)

Knight. Ah, I know what I'm about. As for women—look alive! She is one who might bring me down sooner than the rest. That sincerity, that plain-spokenness—it's out of the common. She *has* got something extraordinary about her, but for all that I'm not going to let myself fall in love. Still, just for a bit of fun I'd rather hang about with her

than another. But love-making? To give up my freedom? There's no danger. They're all idiots who fall in love with women—idiots! (Exit.)

SCENE SEVENTEEN

Another Room in the Inn

(ORTENSIA, DEJANIRA, and FABRIZIO.)

Fabrizio. You will be well looked after here, your ladyship.

Notice this other room. That is for sleeping in, this one for meals, for receiving guests, or indeed to use as you order.

Ortensia. Good, good. Are you the landlord or the valet?

Fabrizio. The valet, at your ladyship's service.

Dejanira (to Ortensia). (He calls us 'your ladyship'!)

Ortensia (to Dejanira). (We must back him up.) Valet!

Fabrizio. Your ladyship?

Ortensia. Tell the landlord to come here. I want to speak to him about business.

Fabrizio. The landlady shall come. I will ask her at once.

(What on earth can two ladies be doing here on their own?

By their manner and their clothes they seem to be of

quality.) (Exit.)

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(DEJANIRA and ORTENSIA.)

Dejanira. He calls us 'your ladyships.' He thinks we're two grandeess.

Ortensia. A good thing. They'll treat us the better for that.

Dejanira. But they'll make us pay more.

Ortensia. Oh, as for the bills, they'll have to reckon with me.

I've been a good many years in the world.

Dejanira. I don't want us to get into any trouble through these titles.

Ortensia. My dear, you've no spirit. Two comedy-actresses—accustomed to impersonate countesses, mar-

chionesses, and princesses—won't have much difficulty in playing their parts at an inn.

Dejanira. But when our company arrives they'll make us drop it at once.

Ortensia. They can't get to Florence to-day. It'll take them at least three days to sail here from Pisa.

Dejanira. Just think how wretched—to come by boat!

Ortensia. For lack of the needful. Anyway, *we* came in a coach.

Dejanira. That was the best yarn we've put up.

Ortensia. But if I hadn't stood at the door we should have got nowhere.

SCENE NINETEEN

(Those present and FABRIZIO.)

Fabrizio. The landlady is now at your service.

Ortensia. Good.

Fabrizio. And I beg you to give me your orders. I've waited on other ladies. Please do me the honour to let me serve your ladyships also with my utmost attention.

Ortensia. If I want anything I will use you.

Dejanira. (Ortensia! You do these parts beautifully!)

Fabrizio. May I just ask you, milady, to be so good as to give me your noble names for the register? (*He produces a pen and a small book.*)

Dejanira. (Now we're in for it.)

Ortensia. Why must I give my name?

Fabrizio. We first-class innkeepers are obliged to give the name, home address, nationality, and rank of every traveller who lodges at our inn. If we don't, we're dropped on.

Dejanira. (My dear, the titles have done us in.)

Ortensia. But many must give false names?

Fabrizio. As for that, we just write down the name that's given us, and inquire no further.

Ortensia. Put down—the Baroness Ortensia del Poggio, from Palermo.

Fabrizio. (A Sicilian! That means hot blood.) (*Writing.*)

And you, milady?

Dejanira. Oh, I . . . (What shall I say?)

Ortensia. Go on, Countess Dejanira—give him your name.

Fabrizio. If you please.

Dejanira. Didn't you catch it?

Fabrizio. The most noble lady the Countess Dejanira . . .
(*writing*) and the surname?

Ortensia. Why—dal Sole, from Rome.

Fabrizio. That's all. Excuse my bothering you. The landlady will be here now. (Didn't I say they were two grand ladies? I hope it means good business. There ought to be tips enough.) (*Exit.*)

Dejanira. Baroness—your humble servant.

Ortensia. Countess—I curtsy to you.

Dejanira. To what good fortune do I owe this most happy opportunity of presenting my profoundest respects?

Ortensia. Nothing gushes forth from the springs of your heart except floods of graciousness.

SCENE TWENTY

(Those present and MIRANDOLINA.)

Dejanira. La, madam, you flatter me.

Ortensia. Your merit, Countess, requires even more.

Mirandolina. (Goodness! What ceremonious ladies!)

Dejanira. (Oh, I do want to laugh!)

Ortensia. Hush! Here's the landlady!

Mirandolina. I curtsy to you, ladies.

Ortensia. Good morning, young woman.

Dejanira. Delighted to meet you, madam.

Ortensia. (Sh!)

Mirandolina. Permit me to kiss your hand.

Ortensia. You are welcome.

Mirandolina (to Dejanira). And yours, milady.

Dejanira. Oh, don't bother!

Ortensia. Tut, tut! You must condescend to this young woman. Give her your hand.

Mirandolina. Please.

Dejanira. There! *(She gives her hand, turns away and laughs.)*

Mirandolina. Milady laughs. At what?

Ortensia. The dear Countess! She is still laughing at me.

I told her something that amused her.

Mirandolina. *(I'd swear they're not ladies. If they were, they wouldn't come alone.)*

Ortensia. About business—we must discuss that.

Mirandolina. What, are you alone? Have you no gentlemen, no servants, nobody?

Ortensia. My husband, the Baron——

(Dejanira laughs outright.)

Mirandolina. Why do you laugh, lady?

Ortensia. Yes—why do you laugh?

Dejanira. At the Baron, your husband——

Ortensia. Well, he *is* a funny man. He's forever cracking jokes. He is following on with Count Orazio, the Countess's husband.

(Dejanira bursts out laughing.)

Mirandolina. And the Count also makes you laugh?

Ortensia. Really, dear Countess, do behave with a little more decorum.

Mirandolina. Dear ladies, be so good as to do me a favour.

We are alone. No one can overhear us. This Count and this Baron—they simply don't

Ortensia. What's that you say? Do you question our quality?

Mirandolina. Forgive me, your ladyship—and don't get excited or you'll make the Countess laugh.

Dejanira. And what matter if I do?

Ortensia. Countess, Countess!

Mirandolina. I quite see what you mean, milady.

Dejanira. If you can guess that, you're clever.

Mirandolina. You mean—what matter if we do pretend to

be two ladies, seeing that we are really two commoners.
Now, isn't that right?

Dejanira. Well, and now that you know?

Ortensia. What an actress! Can't keep up her part!

Dejanira. I could never act off the stage.

Mirandolina. Splendid, Baroness! I like your spirit. I
admire your pluck.

Ortensia. Oh, sometimes I just have a little fun.

Mirandolina. And I just adore people who have spirit.

Make yourselves as much at home in my inn as if you
owned it—except that if I should be visited by persons of
quality I shall ask you to let me have this apartment, and
I'll give you some good rooms instead.

Dejanira. Of course.

Ortensia. When I spend money I mean to be accommodated
like a lady. In this room I am, and I won't go to
another.

Mirandolina. Oh, Baroness, be so good. . . . Ah, here's
a gentleman who is lodging at the inn. Whenever he
sees women, the hunt's up.

Ortensia. Is he rich?

Mirandolina. I don't know his affairs.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

(Those present and the MARQUIS.)

Marquis. Excuse me—may I come in?

Ortensia. Pray, command me.

Marquis. At your service, ladies.

Dejanira. Sir—your humble servant.

Ortensia. I salute you with all respect.

Marquis (to Mirandolina). Are they foreigners?

Mirandolina. Yes, your Excellency. They come to honour
my inn.

Ortensia. ('Excellency'! Good gracious!)

Dejanira. (Ortensia has booked him already.)

Marquis. And these ladies, who are they?

Mirandolina. This is the Baroness Ortensia del Poggio, and this, the Countess Dejanira dal Sole.

Marquis. Oh—really ladies of position.

Ortensia. And you, sir, who are you?

Marquis. I am the Marquis of Forlipopoli.

Dejanira. (The landlady intends to keep up the joke!)

Ortensia. I rejoice to have the honour of knowing so illustrious a nobleman.

Marquis. If I can be of any service to you, pray command me. I am charmed that you have come to stay at this inn. You will find a most gracious landlady.

Mirandolina. This gentleman is too kind. He honours me with his protection.

Marquis. I do indeed. I protect her—I protect every one who comes to this inn—and if you should require me, let me know.

Ortensia. If I do, I shall avail myself of your courtesy.

Marquis. And you also, Countess, please make use of me.

Dejanira. I shall esteem myself happy if I have the honour of being enrolled among your most humble servants.

Mirandolina (to Ortensia). (That's a true comedy-phrase!)

Ortensia. (The title of Countess has given her the cue.)

(The Marquis takes from his pocket a fine silk handkerchief and makes as if to dab his forehead.)

Mirandolina. What a grand handkerchief, Marquis!

Marquis. Ah, you think so? Beautiful? I'm a man of taste, what?

Mirandolina. Of superb taste.

Marquis (to Ortensia). Have you seen others as beautiful?

Ortensia. It's magnificent. I've never seen its like. (If I borrow it he might give it me.)

Marquis (to Dejanira). It comes from London.

Dejanira. It's lovely. I like it immensely.

Marquis. You'd call me a man of taste, eh?

Dejanira. (But he doesn't say 'It's at your disposal'!)

Marquis. I'm sorry the Count doesn't know how to spend

his money well. He chucks it about, but never buys a trifle that's in the best taste.

Mirandolina. But the Marquis knows, perceives, recognizes, discriminates.

Marquis (*carefully folding the handkerchief*). One must fold it properly, so as not to ruin it. One has to treat stuff of this kind with care. . . . (*To Mirandolina.*) Take it.

Mirandolina. You wish me to put it in your room?

Marquis. No. Put it in yours.

Mirandolina. But why in mine?

Marquis. Because—I give it you.

Mirandolina. Oh, excuse me, your Excellency . . .

Marquis. Not a word. I give it you.

Mirandolina. But I couldn't . . .

Marquis. Now, don't make me angry.

Mirandolina. Oh, if it comes to that, the Marquis knows that I don't want to offend any one. And so that you shan't be angry, I'll accept it.

Dejanira (*to Ortensia*). What charming pretence!

Ortensia. And yet they talk of actresses!

Marquis (*to Ortensia*). Well, what do you say? I've given a handkerchief of that quality to the inn-hostess.

Ortensia. A most liberal gentleman.

Marquis. I'm always like that.

Mirandolina. (It's the first present that he's ever given me, and I can't think how he came by such a handkerchief.)

Dejanira. Marquis, are such handkerchiefs to be had in Florence? I should dearly love to possess one like it.

Marquis. One like that is difficult to find, but we'll see.

Mirandolina. (Well done, Countess!)

Ortensia. Marquis, you know the ways of this city. Will you send me a good shoemaker? I need some shoes.

Marquis. Of course. I will send you mine.

Mirandolina. (Very realistic, but there's only one to be had.)

Ortensia. Perhaps, dear Marquis, you will favour us with a little of your company?

Dejanira. Won't you dine with us?

Marquis. Most delighted. (Don't be jealous, Mirandolina —you know that I'm yours.)

Mirandolina. (Please yourself. I like to see you amused.)

Ortensia. And you shall be the subject of our conversation.

Dejanira. We don't know any one here except you.

Marquis. My dear young ladies, I am wholly at your service.

SCENE TWENTY-TWO

(Those present and the COUNT.)

Count. Mirandolina, I was looking for you.

Mirandolina. I am here with these ladies.

Count. Ladies? I humbly present my compliments.

Ortensia. Your devoted servant. (To *Dejanira.*) Here's a grandee even more gorgeous than the other.

Dejanira. (But I'm no good at milking.)

Marquis (to Mirandolina). Quick—show the handkerchief to the Count.

Mirandolina. Look, Count—this lovely present which the Marquis gave me.

Count. I'm delighted to hear of it. Well done, Marquis!

Marquis. Oh, nothing, nothing. A bagatelle. Put it away. I'd rather you didn't mention it. Folk mustn't know what I do.

Mirandolina. (Not know what he does, and yet he makes me show it? Pride and poverty side by side.) ~~_____~~ *hides*

Count (to Mirandolina). With permission of these ladies, I want to say something to you.

Ortensia. Make yourself quite at home.

Marquis. In your pocket that handkerchief will hardly show.

Mirandolina. Then I'll put it in cotton wool so that it shan't get crushed.

Count (to Mirandolina). You see this little diamond?

Mirandolina. Most beautiful!

Count. It's a match for the earrings I gave you.

(*Ortensia and Dejanira notice this and speak to each other softly.*)

Mirandolina. It's a match, certainly, but it's even more beautiful.

Marquis. (Damn this Count, damn his diamonds, damn his money and the devil that possesses him!)

Count. Well, since you have its companions—look you, I give you this stone.

Mirandolina. But I simply can't take it.

Count. Now don't you upset me!

Mirandolina. Oh, I never upset any one, and so as not to offend you, I will take it.

(*Ortensia and Dejanira, speaking as before, observe the Count's generosity.*)

Mirandolina. Ah, what do you say, Marquis? Isn't this a fine stone?

Marquis. Of its kind the handkerchief is finer.

Count. Of its kind—a rather big difference in kind!

Marquis. Superb behaviour! Boasting of the expense in public!

Count. Yes, yes, you make your gifts in secret, of course.

Mirandolina. (It's perfectly true here that when two fall out the third comes by her own.)

Marquis. And so, dear ladies, I shall join you for lunch.

Ortensia (to Count). And this other gentleman—who may he be?

Count. I am the Count of Albafiorita—at your service.

Dejanira (going over to the Count). My! A famous family! I know it.

Count (to Dejanira). I am yours to command.

Ortensia (to Count). And are you lodging here?

Count. Yes, madam.

Dejanira. Is there much to amuse one?

Count. Oh, I think so.

Marquis. My dear ladies, you must be tired from standing so long. Would you like me to attend you in your room?

Ortensia (contemptuously). Many thanks. From what country are you, Count?

Count. I am a Neapolitan.

Ortensia. Then we are almost compatriots. I am a Palermitan.

Dejanira. And I a Roman—but I've been to Naples, and it would intrigue me vastly to talk with a Neapolitan nobleman.

Count. At your service, ladies. You are alone? You have no menfolk?

Marquis. I am here, sir, and they have no need of you.

Ortensia. We are alone, Count. We will tell you why.

Count. Mirandolina.

Mirandolina. Sir?

Count. Make ready for three in my room. (*To Ortensia and Dejanira.*) You will honour me?

Ortensia. We will accept your courtesy.

Marquis. But these ladies have invited me.

Count. They are free to do as they wish, but my little table will not accommodate more than three.

Marquis. But I must see this——

Ortensia. Come, let us go, Count. The Marquis will honour us some other time. (*Exit.*)

Dejanira. If you find that handkerchief, Marquis, let me know. (*Exit.*)

Marquis. Count, Count, you shall pay for this.

Count. What's wrong with you?

Marquis. I am who I am, and I won't be treated like this. There! So she wants a handkerchief, a handkerchief of that kind? Well, she won't get it. Mirandolina, keep it carefully. Such handkerchiefs are hard to come by. You can come by diamonds, but you can't come by handkerchiefs of that kind. (*Exit.*)

Mirandolina. (Oh, the great fool!)

Count. Dear Mirandolina, you don't mind if I humour these two ladies, do you?

Mirandolina. Not in the least, sir.

Count. I do it for your sake. I do it to increase the custom and the attractions of your inn. For the rest, I am yours.

My heart is yours, and so are my riches. Use them freely,
for I make you their mistress. (Exit.)

SCENE TWENTY-THREE

(MIRANDOLINA alone.)

Mirandolina. For all his riches and all his presents he will never make me love him: neither will the Marquis—
much less, indeed—with his ridiculous protection. If I had to tie myself up with one of the two it would certainly be with the one who spends more. But I don't concern myself with one or the other. I'm determined to win the love of the Knight of Ripafratta; and I wouldn't give up that pleasure, not for a jewel twice as big as this one. I'll test myself. I'm not confident that I have the skill of those two charming actresses, but—I'll see. The Count and the Marquis, being occupied with these two girls, will leave me for a little while in peace, and I shall be able to deal with the Knight at my leisure. What if he won't succumb? But where's the man who can resist a woman when she has time enough to employ her arts? If a man runs away he needn't fear to be conquered; but let him stay where he stands, let him only listen, let him meet us in the open field, and sooner or later—in spite of himself—he can't help yielding! (Exit.)

ACT TWO

11:45

SCENE ONE

The Knight's Room. A Table spread for Lunch. Chairs.

(Present, the KNIGHT and his SERVANT, afterwards FABRIZIO.
The KNIGHT is fingering a book. FABRIZIO sets the
soup on the table.)

Fabrizio. Tell your master that if he's ready, the soup is
served.

Servant. You could tell him yourself.

Fabrizio. He's such a boor that I never speak to him unless
I must.

Servant. Still, he's not bad. He can't bear women, but
otherwise—with men—he's delightful.

Fabrizio. Can't bear women! Poor devil! He doesn't
know what's good. (Exit.)

Servant. Sir, if you're ready, lunch is served.

(*The Knight puts down his book and sits to the table.*)

Knight (to Servant as he falls to). Lunch is early to-day.

(*The Servant stands behind the Knight's chair, with a plate
under his arm.*)

Servant. This room is served before all the others. The
Count of Albafiorita began bawling to be first served,
but the landlady had decided that the first table should
be yours, sir.

Knight. I'm obliged to her for the attention.

Servant. She's a really excellent woman. I have never seen
a more gracious landlady anywhere.

Knight (turning round a little). You like her, eh?

Servant. If it weren't that I should do a disservice to my
master, I'd stay with Mirandolina as a waiter.

Knight (giving him the plate, which he changes). Poor devil!
Whatever would you have her do with you?

Servant. I could serve a woman of that kind like a dog.
(*He goes for a plate.*)

Knight. Zounds! That woman enchants everybody. It would be a joke if she enchanted me too. To-morrow I go to Leghorn. Let her get busy to-day if she can, but she may as well realize that I'm not so feeble. It'd need more to make me get over my aversion to women.

SCENE TWO

(The KNIGHT and the SERVANT with meat and another plate.)

Servant. The landlady says that if you don't care for the fowl she'll send up a pigeon.

Knight. I like anything. Well, what is it?

Servant. The landlady bade me tell her if you like this sauce, because she made it with her own hands.

Knight. She obliges me more and more. (*Tastes it.*) She is most kind. Tell her that I like it very much, and give her my thanks.

Servant. Very good, sir.

Knight. Go and tell her at once.

Servant. At once? (How amazing! He sends a compliment to a woman!) (*Exit.*)

Knight. An exquisite sauce! I've never tasted a better (*eating*). Really, if Mirandolina behaves like this she will always have good customers. A good table, good napery. And then one can't deny that she's charming—but what I like most in her is that honesty. Honesty—there's nothing more beautiful than that. Why is it that I can't bear women? Because they are deceivers, liars, flatterers. But this splendid honesty . . .

SCENE THREE

(The KNIGHT and the SERVANT.)

Servant. She thanks the gentleman for his kindness which has supplied her deficiencies.

Knight. Fine, Mr. Ceremony, fine!

Servant. She is now making another dish with her own hands, but what it is I can't say.

Knight. Making it?

Servant. Yes, sir.

Knight. Give me something to drink.

Servant. Very good, sir.

Knight. I shall have to match her in generosity. She is too gracious; I shall have to pay double. I'll treat her well and leave quickly. (*The Servant presents the drink.*)
The Count has gone to lunch? (*Drinks.*)

Servant. Yes, sir, this very minute. He is entertaining to-day. He has two ladies at his table.

Knight. Two ladies? Who are they?

Servant. They came to the inn a few hours back. I don't know who they are.

Knight. Did the Count know them?

Servant. I think not; but he'd no sooner seen them than he invited them to lunch.

Knight. How silly! He has hardly clapped eyes on a couple of women when he's tied up with them. And heaven knows who they may be. Let them be what they please, they're women, and that's enough. The Count will ruin himself, that's clear. Tell me, is the Marquis at table?

Servant. He left the house and has not been seen again since.

Knight. Ready. (*Pushes away his plate.*)

Servant. Here, sir.

Knight. Lunching with two women! What company! Their tittle-tattle would take away all *my* appetite.

SCENE FOUR

(Those present and MIRANDOLINA with a plate in her hand.)

Mirandolina. May I come in?

Knight. Who is it?

Servant. What, sir?

Knight. Relieve her of that dish.

Mirandolina. Pardon me. Let me have the honour of putting it on the table myself.

Knight. That's not work for you.

Mirandolina. Oh, sir, what am I? A fine lady? I am a servant whom you favour by coming to my inn.

Knight. (How very modest!)

Mirandolina. I shouldn't really mind waiting at all the tables myself, but for certain reasons I don't. Perhaps you catch my meaning. To you I can come without fear, quite freely.

Knight. Thank you. What meat is that?

Mirandolina. A ragout. I made it myself.

Knight. Then it will be good. If you made it, it will be good.

Mirandolina. Oh, sir, you are too kind. There's nothing that I do well. I only wish there were, for then I might satisfy a gentleman of such breeding.

Knight. (Leghorn to-morrow!) If you've things to do, don't put yourself out for me.

Mirandolina. There's nothing to do, sir; the house is well provided with cooks and servants. I should like to know if that dish is to your taste.

Knight. I'll tell you at once. (*Tastes it.*) Good—rare. What a savour! I can't think what it is.

Mirandolina. Ah, sir, I have some special secrets. These hands can make some good things.

Knight (*to Servant, with a certain violence*). Something to drink!

Mirandolina. After that dish you ought to drink something good, sir.

Knight (*to Servant*). Give me some Borgogna.

Mirandolina. Excellent! Borgogna's a rare wine! I think it's the best you can drink with meals.

(*The Servant puts a bottle and a glass on the table.*)

Knight. You have a fine taste in everything.

Mirandolina. Well, I don't often make a mistake.

Knight. All the same, you're mistaken this time.

Mirandolina. How, sir?

Knight. In thinking that I deserve your special attention.

Mirandolina (*sighing*). Ah, sir——

Knight (*severely*). What's this? What do these sighs mean?

Mirandolina. I'll tell you. I treat every one with consideration, and it saddens me to think that nobody's grateful.

Knight. I shall not be ungrateful to you.

Mirandolina. I do not aspire to deserve your thanks. I am merely doing my duty.

Knight. No, no—I know very well . . . I am not such a ruffian as you think. I shall give you no cause for sorrow.

(*He pours wine into the glass.*)

Mirandolina. But—sir—I don't understand . . .

Knight. Your health!

Mirandolina. Many thanks. You do me too much honour.

Knight. A rare wine!

Mirandolina. I adore Borgogna.

Knight (*offering the wine*). If you care to, help yourself.

Mirandolina. Oh, thank you, sir—no.

Knight. You've had lunch?

Mirandolina. Yes, sir.

Knight. Wouldn't you like a glass?

Mirandolina. I don't deserve such kindness.

Knight. I'm very pleased to give it you.

Mirandolina. What can I say? I will accept your courtesy.

Knight (*to Servant*). Bring a glass.

Mirandolina. Oh no, no. If you allow me, I'll take this one.

(*She drinks from the Knight's glass.*)

Knight. Why, that's my own.

Mirandolina (*smiling*). I drink to your courtesy.

(*The Servant puts the other glass on the salver.*)

Knight (*pouring out the wine*). (Little villain!) 2

Mirandolina. But it's some time since I ate anything. I'm afraid it will upset me.

Knight. No fear of that.

Mirandolina. Perhaps you will let me have a mouthful of bread.

Knight. Of course (*giving her some bread*). Here it is. (*Mirandolina, holding the glass in one hand and the bread in the other, betrays some discomfort, not seeing how she is to make a sop.*) You're not at your ease. Won't you sit down?

Mirandolina. Oh, I'm not worthy, sir.

Knight. Tut, tut. We're alone. (*To the Servant.*) Bring her a chair.

Servant. (The master must be going to die. He has never done as much as this.) (*He goes to fetch a chair.*)

Mirandolina. If the Count and the Marquis knew of this, poor me!

Knight. Why?

Mirandolina. They've tried a hundred times to get me to eat or drink with them, but I never have.

Knight. Go on—make yourself at home.

Mirandolina. I must obey you. (*She sits down and makes a sop.*)

Knight (softly, to the Servant). Listen. Don't you tell any one that our hostess has sat at my table.

Servant. Never fear! (*This new line amazes me.*)

Mirandolina (toasting). To everything that pleases the Knight of Ripafratta!

Knight. Thank you, my charming little hostess.

Mirandolina. The toast I gave doesn't include women.

Knight. No? Why not?

Mirandolina. Because I know that you can't bear women.

Knight. True—I could never stand the sight of them.

Mirandolina. And may you always feel like that!

Knight. I don't want . . . (*He glances at the Servant.*)

Mirandolina. What, sir?

Knight. Come here (*speaking close to her ear*). I don't want you to change my nature.

Mirandolina. I, sir? But how?

Knight (to the Servant). You can go.

Servant. Do you want anything?

Knight. Cook me a couple of eggs, and when they're ready, bring them.

Servant. How would you have them done?

Knight. Oh, anyhow—scrambled.

Servant. (I see that the master's warming up.) (Exit.)

Knight. Mirandolina, you are a delightful girl.

Mirandolina. Oh, sir, you're teasing.

Knight. Listen. I'll tell you something true, absolutely true, that redounds to your credit.

Mirandolina. I shall be glad to hear it.

Knight. You are the first woman in the world whose company I have endured with pleasure.

Mirandolina. Well, you see, sir—it isn't that there's any merit in me, but just that sometimes there are temperaments that mix well. This sympathy, this cordiality, arises between people who don't know each other. Now, for you, I have experienced a feeling which I have never had for any one else.

Knight. I'm afraid you want to make me lose my peace of mind.

Mirandolina. Come, sir—since you are a wise man, behave in accordance with your nature. Don't fall into the frailties of others. Indeed, if I saw that happening I shouldn't come here again. I confess that I, too, have felt something which I can't name; but I don't mean to bother myself about men, and much less about one who hates women, and who—perhaps, perhaps—just to test me and then have the laugh of me, comes here with a new way of talking to beguile me. May I have a little more Borgogna, Sir Knight?

Knight. Why—all you will. (He fills a glass.)

Mirandolina. (He's just ripe to fall.)

Knight. Take it. (Gives her the glass.)

Mirandolina. Thank you so much. But you're not drinking?

Knight. Yes, yes, I am. (Better drink. One devil will chase the other away.) (He pours wine into his own glass.)

Mirandolina (coaxingly). Sir Knight!

Knight. What?

Mirandolina. Touch glasses. (*They do so.*) Long live good friends!

Knight (*a little sheepishly*). Good friends!

Mirandolina. To those who mean well—and have no evil intent!

Knight. Their health!

SCENE FIVE

(Those present and the MARQUIS.)

Marquis. I'm here too. Whose health is it?

Knight (*haughtily*). Hullo, Marquis!

Marquis. It's all right, my friend. I called, but nobody came.

Mirandolina (*offering to go*). With your permission——

Knight (*to Mirandolina*). Stay. (*To the Marquis.*) I don't take such liberties with you.

Marquis. Pray forgive me. We're friends. I thought you were alone. Delighted to see you with our charming hostess. What do you say now? Isn't she a masterpiece?

Mirandolina. I came here, sir, to wait upon the Knight. I felt a little faint, and he put me right with a glass of Borgogna.

Marquis. Is that Borgogna?

Knight. Yes—Borgogna.

Marquis. The real stuff?

Knight. Anyhow, I paid the real price.

Marquis. I can tell it. Let me taste it and I'll tell you whether it is or isn't.

Knight. Ho, there!

SCENE SIX

(Those present and the SERVANT with the eggs.)

Knight. A glass for the Marquis.

Marquis. Not too small a glass. Borgogna's not a liqueur. In order to judge of it, one must have plenty.

Servant. The eggs, sir. (*He puts them on the table.*)

Knight. I shan't want anything else.

Marquis. What's that food?

Knight. Eggs.

Marquis. I don't like them.

(*The Servant takes them away.*)

Mirandolina. Marquis, with permission from this gentleman, do try this ragout which I made myself.

Marquis. Oh yes. Ah! a chair! (*The Servant fetches him a chair, and puts the glass on the salver.*) A fork.

Knight. Get him an outfit.

(*The Servant does so.*)

Mirandolina (rising). I feel better now, sir. I'll go.

Marquis (to Knight). Do me the pleasure of allowing her to stay a little longer.

Knight. What do you want with her?

Marquis. I want you to taste a glass of Cyprus. No matter who you are, you have never tasted its like. And I should like Mirandolina to try it, and give us her opinion.

Knight. Then—to please the Marquis—don't go.

Mirandolina. The Marquis will excuse me.

Marquis. Don't you want to taste it?

Mirandolina. Another time, your Excellency.

Knight. Come—stay with us.

Mirandolina. Are those your orders?

Knight. I tell you, stay with us.

Mirandolina (sitting). Then I obey.

Knight. (More and more obliging!)

Marquis. What a dish! What a ragout! What savour! What flavour!

Knight (softly to Mirandolina). The Marquis is jealous because you're close to me.

Mirandolina. He's nothing to me.

Knight. You are a man-hater, then? ✓

Mirandolina. Just as you are a woman-hater.

Knight. My enemies are being avenged upon me.

Mirandolina. How, sir?

Knight. Ah, you little rogue! You'll see how, right enough. . . .

Marquis. My friend, your health!

Knight. Well, and what do you think of it?

Marquis. By your leave, sir, it is—nothing. You shall try my Cyprus.

Knight. But where is it, this Cyprus?

Marquis. I have it here. I carry it about me, and I intend that we should enjoy it; but—here it is! Look! (*He brings out a tiny bottle.*)

Mirandolina. It seems, Marquis, that you don't like your wine to go to the head.

Marquis. This? One drinks it in drops—like Melissa spirits. Ho—some glasses! (*He opens the bottle. The Servant brings liqueur glasses.*) Those are too big. Haven't you any smaller? (*He covers the bottle with his hand.*)

Knight. Bring the rose-oil glasses.

Mirandolina. Surely it will suffice if we just smell it?

Marquis. Ah—lovely! It has a most soothing fragrance. (*He sniffs it. The Servant puts three tiny glasses on the salver. The Marquis pours the wine very gingerly, not filling the glasses, and then distributes it. He corks the bottle carefully.*) Nectar! Ambrosia! Distilled manna!

Knight (to Mirandolina). What do you make of this absurdity?

Mirandolina (to Knight). The swilling of old bottles!

Marquis. Well, what do you say?

Knight. Good—rare!

Marquis. Ha! And do you like it, Mirandolina?

Mirandolina. I never can pretend, sir. I don't like it. I think it's bad, and I can't say that it's good. I admire people who can pretend—but the person who can deceive in one thing can deceive in another.

Knight. (A hit at me! I don't know why.)

Marquis. Mirandolina, you don't understand this sort of wine. I am sorry for you. Now, you *did* like the hand-

kerchief that I gave you—and you appreciated it—but you don't appreciate Cyprus. (*Finishes his glass.*)

Mirandolina. (Just listen how he brags.)

Knight. (Not like me.)

Mirandolina. (Your brag is your contempt for women.)

Knight. (And yours is the overcoming of men.)

Mirandolina (*prettily*). (No, no, no.)

Knight (*with some vehemence*). (Yes, yes, yes!)

Marquis (*to the Servant*). Ho—three clean glasses!

Mirandolina. No more for me.

Marquis. Don't you worry. I'm not doing this for you.

(*He puts some Cyprus wine into the three glasses.*) My good man, with permission of your master, go to the Count of Albafiorita and tell him from me—loudly, so that every one can hear you—that I beg him to relieve me of a little of my Cyprus wine.

Servant. Very good. (This will certainly not fuddle him!)
(*Exit.*)

Knight. You are really too generous, Marquis.

Marquis. I? You must ask Mirandolina about that.

Mirandolina. Oh yes, indeed.

Marquis. Has the Knight seen the handkerchief?

Mirandolina. Not yet.

Marquis. Show it him. (*To the Knight.*) This taste of the balsam will sustain me for the evening. (*He replaces the bottle decreased by a thimbleful.*)

Mirandolina. Be careful that it doesn't hurt you, Marquis.

Marquis. Ah—you know what hurts me.

Mirandolina. What?

Marquis. Your beautiful eyes.

Mirandolina. Really?

Marquis. Sir Knight, I am desperately in love with her.

Knight. I'm sorry to hear it.

Marquis. You have never experienced love for a woman.

If you had you would sympathize with me.

Knight. I do—sympathize.

Marquis. And I'm as jealous as a beast. I allow her to stay

with you because I know what you are. I wouldn't allow it with another, not for a hundred thousand crowns.

Knight. (This fellow begins to bore me!)

SCENE SEVEN

(Those present, and the SERVANT with a bottle on the salver.)

Servant. The Count thanks your Excellency, and sends you a bottle of Canary.

Marquis. What, what! Would he compare his Canary wine with my Cyprus? Let's see. Poor idiot! It's mere pig-wash—I know it by the smell. (*He rises and takes the bottle.*)

Knight. Taste it first.

Marquis. I have no wish to taste it. Here's another insult from the Count—one like all the rest. He's forever trying to outdo me. He wants to abase me, to provoke me, to make me do something low. And, by jove! I'll commit an act that will serve for a hundred. If you don't drive him out, Mirandolina, there'll be the devil to pay. That man's a bounder. I am who I am, and I'll not put up with such affronts! (*Exit, taking the bottle with him.*)

SCENE EIGHT

(The KNIGHT, MIRANDOLINA, and the SERVANT.)

Knight. The poor Marquis is crazy.

Mirandolina. Well, if his anger should make him ill, at least he has taken the bottle to restore him.

Knight. He's crazy, I tell you. And it's you that have made him so.

Mirandolina. Am I one to make men crazy?

Knight. Yes, you are.

Mirandolina (*rising*). Sir Knight, by your leave——

Knight. Stop!

Mirandolina (*going*). Pardon me. I send no one crazy.

Knight (*rising, but remaining near the table*). Listen to me.

Mirandolina. Pardon me.

Knight (authoritatively). Stop here, I say.

Mirandolina (turning haughtily). What do you wish with me?

Knight. Nothing—(*feeling confused*). Let's have another glass of Borgogna.

Mirandolina. Well, we must be quick about it, for I'm going.

Knight. Sit down.

Mirandolina. No—standing, standing.

Knight (tenderly). Take this. (*He gives her a glass.*)

Mirandolina. I'll sing you a catch, and then I'll go at once—
a catch that my nurse taught me:

Wine and love! With what sweet art
Each can lay our sorrows flat!
This goes down the throat, and that
Down the eyes to take the heart.
Look, I drink: and these eyes too
Then do straightway what yours do.

SCENE NINE

(The KNIGHT and the SERVANT.)

Knight. Splendid! Come here: listen! Damn it! She's gone.

She's escaped—and left a hundred devils tormenting me.

Servant. Would you like the fruit on the table?

Knight. Go to the devil! (*Exit Servant.*)

'Look, I drink: and these eyes too
Then do straightway what yours do.'

What a strange catch it is! You little villain—I know you! You want to crush me, you want to kill me. But she does it so charmingly! She wheedles so well! The devil, the devil—away with her! I'll go to Leghorn. I'll never see her again. May she never again come near me. Curse all women! I swear I'll never go any more where there are women!

SCENE TEN

The Count's Room.

(The COUNT OF ALBAFIORITA, ORTENSIA, and DEJANIRA.)

Count. The Marquis of Forlipopoli is a very quaint character. He is well-born—there's no denying that; but he and his father between them have dissipated everything, and now he has hardly the wherewithal by which to live. All the same, he likes to do the fine thing.

Ortensia. It is clear that he'd like to be generous, but hasn't the means.

Dejanira. He gives what little he can—and wants every one to know of it.

Count. He'd make a good figure in one of your comedies.

Ortensia. Wait till our company arrives and gets into the theatre—then you can count on us making merry over him.

Dejanira. We have players who are there on purpose to imitate quaint personalities.

Count. But if you want us to enjoy ourselves you must include some imitations of fine ladies.

Ortensia. I can do that, right enough, but Dejanira always gives herself away.

Dejanira. I can never help laughing when outsiders take me for a grand lady.

Count. You did well to let me into the secret. By so doing you have given me a chance of effecting something to your advantage.

4 *Ortensia.* The Count will be our protector.

Dejanira. We are friends, and we'll enjoy your kindness together.

Count. I say! I'll speak quite frankly. I will serve you in every way that I can, but there's one thing that will stop me from frequenting your house.

Ortensia. The Count has some little love affair.

Count. Yes; I tell you in confidence—it's the hostess of the inn.

Ortensia. Great heavens! A fine lady, indeed! I'm astonished that the Count should bother himself about a landlady.

Dejanira. It wouldn't be so bad if he allowed his gallantries to be hindered by some actress.

Count. As a matter of fact, I am not much inclined to make love to people like you. You're here to-day and gone to-morrow.

Ortensia. But, sir, isn't that better? In this way, friendships don't drag on forever, and men don't ruin themselves.

Count. Anyhow, I'm not free. I wish her well, and I'd rather not displease her.

Dejanira. But what has she to recommend her?

Count. Oh, plenty.

Ortensia. Why, *Dejanira*, she's all lovely and rosy. (*She signs to Dejanira to rouge herself.*)

Count. She has a great soul.

Dejanira. Oh, but as to the soul, would you compare her with us?

Count. That'll do. Be she what she may, I like *Mirandolina*; and if you desire my friendship, you must speak well of her. Otherwise, consider that you have never known me.

Ortensia. Why, for my part, *Count*, I should call *Mirandolina* a *Venus*.

Dejanira. It's quite true. She has spirit, and she talks well.

Count. Ah, that's better.

Ortensia. If that's all, rest easy.

Count (*looking behind the curtain*). I say! Did you see who went downstairs?

Ortensia. I saw him, yes.

Count. Another fine comedy-part.

Ortensia. Of what kind?

Count. A fellow who can't bear women.

Dejanira. The brute!

Ortensia. He must have an unpleasant recollection of some woman.

Count. Not a bit of it. He's never been in love. He would never have any dealings with women. He despises them all—it's enough to tell you that he despises *Mirandolina*.

Ortensia. Poor boy! If I were put near him, I bet I'd make him change his opinion.

Dejanira. Really big game! Here's an enterprise that I'd like to take on myself.

Count. Listen, my dear friends. Just for pure fun. If you can make him fall in love I'll give you a fine present, as I'm a nobleman.

Ortensia. I've no intention of being rewarded for this. I'll do it for sport.

Dejanira. If the Count wants to do us a kindness he needn't do it for this. We'll amuse ourselves a little until our company turns up.

Count. I don't think you'll achieve anything.

Ortensia. You've a very poor opinion of us, Count.

Dejanira. We may not have *Mirandolina's* charm, but we know a thing or two all the same.

Count. Shall I send for him?

Ortensia. Just as you like.

Count. Ho! Any one there?

SCENE ELEVEN

(Those present and the COUNT'S MAN.)

Count. Ask the Knight of Ripafratta to be so good as to come to me. I have something to say to him.

Man. He is not in his room.

Count. I saw him go toward the kitchen. Find him.

Man. Right, sir. (*Exit.*)

Count. (Why on earth should he go to the kitchen? I'll warrant he went to scold *Mirandolina* for giving him something bad to eat.)

Ortensia. Count, I asked the Marquis to send me his shoemaker, but I'm afraid I shan't see him.

Count. Don't you worry. I'll see to it.

Dejanira. And the Marquis promised *me* a handkerchief. I just hope he'll bring it.

Count. We'll find some handkerchiefs.

Dejanira. As a matter of fact, I need one badly.

Count (*offering his silk handkerchief*). If this will serve you, accept it. It's quite clean.

Dejanira. How kind! Thank you!

Count. Ah, here's the Knight! You had best keep up your parts of fine ladies so that you can the more oblige him to listen to you politely. Withdraw a little. If he sees you, he'll fly.

Ortensia. What is his name?

Count. The Knight of Ripafratta—a Tuscan.

Dejanira. Married?

Count. He can't bear women.

Ortensia (*retiring*). Wealthy?

Count. Yes—very.

Dejanira (*retiring*). Generous?

Count. Fairly.

Ortensia. Come along! (*She withdraws.*)

Dejanira. Give us time, and you'll see! (*She withdraws.*)

SCENE TWELVE

(Those present and the KNIGHT.)

Knight. Is it you who wants me, Count?

Count. Yes—it's I who am bothering you.

Knight. What can I do for you?

Count (*signing to the two girls, who suddenly come forward*).

These two ladies have need of you.

Knight. Very sorry. I haven't time for them.

Ortensia. Sir Knight, I have no wish to trouble you . . .

Dejanira. Just one word . . .

Knight. I beg you to excuse me, ladies. I have some pressing business.

Ortensia. We shall be done in a couple of words.

Dejanira. Just two—no more, sir.

Knight. (The damned Count!)

Count. My dear fellow—two ladies who beg you out of politeness to hear what they wish to say . . .

Knight. I beg your pardon. What can I do for you?

Ortensia. Are you not a Tuscan, sir?

Knight. Yes, madam.

Dejanira. Have you any friends in Florence?

Knight. Friends, yes, and relatives.

Dejanira. You know, sir . . . *you* speak first, dear.

Ortensia. Well, you see, Sir Knight—you know how sometimes——

Knight. Ladies, ladies, I beg of you, be quick. I'm busy.

Count (going). Of course! I see now—my presence embarrasses you. Open your minds freely to the Knight, for I remove the obstacle.

Knight. Stop, stop, man! Listen——

Count. I know my rôle. Your humble servant! (*Exit.*)

SCENE THIRTEEN

(ORTENSIA, DEJANIRA, and the KNIGHT.)

Ortensia. Do please sit down.

Knight. Excuse me—I'd rather not.

Dejanira. So unmannerly with ladies?

Knight. Be so good as to tell me what you want?

Ortensia. We want your help, your protection, your kindness.

Knight. What's wrong?

Dejanira. Our husbands have forsaken us.

Knight (haughtily). Forsaken? What? Two forsaken ladies?

Your husbands—who are they?

Dejanira (to Ortensia). (My dear, I daren't go any further.)

Ortensia. (He's so violent that I'm at a loss too.)

Knight (about to go). Ladies—my respects.

Ortensia. What, will you treat us like that?

Dejanira. A Knight behave thus?

Knight. Pardon me. I am one who much values his own peace of mind. I hear of two ladies who are forsaken by their husbands. Now, there are the makings of a fat lot of trouble. I'm a poor hand at intrigues. I live to myself.

Most honourable ladies, do not look for advice or assistance from me.

Ortensia. Out with it, then! We'll no longer play false with our kind Knight.

Dejanira. Yes, let's speak plainly.

Knight. What does it mean—this change of tone?

Ortensia. We are not great ladies.

Knight. Not?

Dejanira. The Count wanted to play off a little joke on you.

Knight (trying to go). You've had the joke—my respects!

Ortensia. Just a minute!

Knight. What do you want?

Dejanira. Honour us for one moment with your delightful conversation.

Knight. I've things to do. I can't hang about.

Ortensia. We won't ask you to eat anything.

Dejanira. And we won't bring up what they say of you.

Ortensia. We are aware that you can't bear women.

Knight (going). I'm glad you know it,—my respects!

Ortensia. But listen—we are women who couldn't possibly bother you.

Knight. What are you?

Ortensia. Dejanira—you say.

Dejanira. You can tell him just as well as I can.

Knight. Come, what are you?

Ortensia. Two actresses.

Knight. Actresses! Talk away, talk away—for I'm not afraid of you any longer. I am well forearmed against your art.

Ortensia. What do you mean? Explain.

Knight. I know that you're acting both on the stage and off: and thus forearmed, I've nothing to fear from you.

Dejanira. I, sir, can never act off the stage.

Knight (to Dejanira). What is *your* name? Lady Sincere?

Dejanira. My name—

Knight (to Ortensia). And yours? Lady Fleecer?

Ortensia. Sir Knight—

Knight (to Ortensia). And how do you like fleeing people?

Ortensia. I'm not——

Knight (to Dejanira). And how do your 'followers' behave to you, madam?

Dejanira. But I'm not a girl to——

Knight. You see, I know your slang.

Ortensia (trying to take his arm). Oh, you dear man!

Knight. Down with your puds!

Ortensia. Gracious! He's more like one of the gods than a Knight!

Knight. 'Gods'—yes, gallery boys. I understand you all right. And I tell you that you're a pair of impudent hussies!

Dejanira. You say that to me?

Ortensia. To a girl of my sort?

Knight (to Ortensia). What a delightfully made-up face!

Ortensia. (Idiot!) (Exit.)

Knight (to Dejanira). What a charming wig!

Dejanira. (Blast him!) (Exit.)

SCENE FOURTEEN

(The KNIGHT; afterwards, his SERVANT.)

Knight. There! I think I managed that well. What was their idea? To drag me into their nets? Poor fools! They'll go to the Count now, and report the whole fine scene. If they had been ladies I could have done nothing—out of politeness—except fly from them; but whenever I get the chance, I rail at women with all the will in the world. Still, I wasn't able to rail at Mirandolina. She has conquered me with so much grace that I find myself almost compelled to love her. All the same, she's a woman. I won't trust myself. I'll go away. I'll go to-morrow. But if I delay till to-morrow? If I let myself sleep in the house to-night, how can I be certain that Mirandolina won't end by ruining me? (*He ponders.*) Yes! I'll decide like a man!

Servant. Sir!

Knight. What is it?

Servant. The Marquis is in his room, awaiting you. He desires to speak to you.

Knight. What can that idiot want? He won't find me dropping any more money. Let him wait, and when he's sick of waiting he'll give it up. Go to the valet of the inn and tell him to bring my bill at once.

Servant (about to go). Very good.

Knight. Stay! Get the luggage ready for departure from here in two hours.

Servant. You intend to leave?

Knight. Yes. And bring me my sword and hat, and say nothing about it to the Marquis.

Servant. But suppose he sees me with the luggage?

Knight. Say what you like to him. You understand?

Servant. (I don't at all like going away from Mirandolina.) ✂
(Exit.)

Knight. Yes—it's true. The thought of leaving here fills me with a distaste that I've never felt before. So much the worse for me if I stop. I must get away all the sooner. Oh, women! I shall always give them a bad name. Why, even when they try to do good they do evil. ✂

SCENE FIFTEEN

(The KNIGHT and FABRIZIO.)

Fabrizio. Is it true, sir, that you want your bill?

Knight. Yes. Have you brought it?

Fabrizio. The landlady is making it out now.

Knight. Does she make out the bills?

Fabrizio. Always. Even in her father's time. She writes and draws up a bill better than any young merchant.

Knight. (What an extraordinary woman!)

Fabrizio. And you mean to go so soon?

Knight. Yes. My affairs require it.

Fabrizio. I hope you'll remember the valet . . .

Knight. Just bring me the bill, and I'll see to that.

Fabrizio. You wish to have it here?

Knight. Here—yes. I shan't leave my room for the present.

Fabrizio. You're right. That bore, the Marquis, is in his room. The popinjay! He plays at being my mistress's lover: but he can't move her an inch. Mirandolina must be *my* wife.

Knight (tartly). The bill!

Fabrizio. At once, sir.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE SIXTEEN

(The KNIGHT alone.)

Knight. Every one's crazy about Mirandolina. And no wonder—for even I begin to feel myself getting warm. But I'll go away. I'll overcome this mysterious power. . . . Who's there? Mirandolina? What does she want with me? She has a ledger in her hand. She's bringing me the bill. What ought I to do? I shall have to withstand this final assault. Two hours from now I depart.

SCENE SEVENTEEN

(The KNIGHT and MIRANDOLINA, with a ledger.)

Mirandolina (doubtfully). Sir . . .

Knight. What is it, Mirandolina?

Mirandolina (standing back). Excuse me . . .

Knight. Come in.

Mirandolina (sadly). You asked for your bill. I have made it out.

Knight. Give it me.

Mirandolina. Here. (*She wipes her eyes with her apron as she gives it.*)

Knight. What's the matter? Crying?

Mirandolina. It's nothing, sir. Some smoke got into my eyes.

Knight. Smoke in your eyes? Oh, well—how much is the bill? (*reading it.*) Twenty florins? Four days and all this generous treatment—for twenty florins?

Mirandolina. That is your bill.

Knight. But those two special dishes that you gave me this morning are not entered.

Mirandolina. Pardon me. I do not charge for presents.

Knight. You have been making presents to me?

Mirandolina. Forgive me the liberty. Accept them as an act of . . . (*she covers her face as though she were crying*).

Knight. But what's the matter with you?

Mirandolina. I don't know whether it's the smoke or whether it's some affection of the eyes.

Knight. I shouldn't like to think that you'd hurt yourself in cooking those two wonderful dishes.

Mirandolina. If it were that—I should suffer—gladly . . .

Knight. (I simply must get away!) Now, look you. Here are two crowns. Have a good time with them for the sake of my love—and be sorry for me—(*he becomes lost*). (*Mirandolina, without speaking, falls in a swoon on one of the chairs.*) *Mirandolina!* Goodness! *Mirandolina!* She's fainted! Could she be in love with me? So soon? Why not? Am I not in love with her? Dear *Mirandolina—dear!* Me—saying 'dear' to a woman! But if she's fainted because of me? How lovely you are! Have I anything that could bring her round? Not being used to women, I've no salts, no bottles. Any one there? Quick! I'll go myself. Poor little thing! Bless you! (*He goes out, then returns.*)

Mirandolina. So now it has happened! We have many means of attack by which to conquer men, but when they are obstinate, a fainting-fit is our irresistible heavy artillery. He's coming. (*She collapses on to the chair.*)

Knight (*returning with a glass of water*). Here I am, here I am. She's not recovered yet. There's no question—she loves me. If I sprinkle water on her face she ought to come to. Cheer up, cheer up! I'm here, dear. I'll not go away—now.

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(Those present, and the SERVANT with sword and hat.)

Servant. Here are your sword and hat, sir.

Knight. Get out!

Servant. The luggage——

Knight. Get out, and be damned to you!

Servant. Mirandolina!

Knight. Out you go, or I'll crack your skull. (*Threatens him with the glass.*) (*Exit Servant.*) Still not recovered? Her forehead—perspiring! Come—Mirandolina—dear—pull yourself together, open your eyes! Speak to me freely.

SCENE NINETEEN

(Those present, the MARQUIS and the COUNT.)

Marquis. Knight!

Count. My friend!

Knight. (Oh, damn them!)

Marquis. Mirandolina!

Mirandolina (*rising*). Oh dear . . .

Marquis. I have restored her.

Count. Knight, I rejoice for you.

Marquis. Well done indeed,—you that cannot bear women.

Knight. You dare——?

Count. And so you've succumbed?

Knight. I don't care what you are—go to the devil! (*He throws the glass on the floor, breaking it in front of the Count and the Marquis, and goes out angrily.*)

Count. The Knight's gone mad! (*Exit.*)

Marquis. I mean to have satisfaction for this insult! (*Exit.*)

Mirandolina. My end is accomplished. His heart is on fire—in flames—in ashes. Nothing remains for me now but to consolidate my victory by making my triumph public—to the shame of presumptuous men and to the honour of my sex. (*Exit.*)

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

(*Mirandolina's Room. A small table, with laundry waiting to be ironed.*)

(MIRANDOLINA; afterwards FABRIZIO.)

Mirandolina. Well, now the time for amusing myself is over, I must get to my work. To begin with, I'll iron this laundry before putting it up to dry. Ho—Fabrizio!

Fabrizio. Madam?

Mirandolina. Do me a favour. Bring me the hot iron.

Fabrizio. Yes, madam.

Mirandolina. I'm sorry to bother you.

Fabrizio. It's nothing, madam. I eat your bread, and it's my duty to serve you.

Mirandolina. Stay. Listen. You're not forced to do these things for me, but I know that for me you do them willingly, and I—but no more of that.

Fabrizio. Why, for you I'd carry water-buckets from my ears. But I see that it's all useless.

Mirandolina. Useless? Am I ungrateful?

Fabrizio. You don't stoop to poor men. The nobility please you too well.

Mirandolina. Oh, you silly! If I were to tell you everything . . . Away with you—fetch me the iron.

Fabrizio. But I've seen with my own eyes—

Mirandolina. Come—not so much grumbling. Get me the iron.

Fabrizio (*going*). All right. I'll serve you—but for precious little.

Mirandolina (*as if to herself, but intending to be heard*). With some men, the better disposed you are towards them the worse it is.

Fabrizio (*turning back and speaking tenderly*). What did you say?

Mirandolina. Are you going to fetch me that iron?

Fabrizio. Yes, I'll bring it. (I'm quite bewildered. Now she encourages me and now she repulses me. I'm quite bewildered.) (Exit.)

SCENE TWO

(MIRANDOLINA; then the KNIGHT'S SERVANT.)

Mirandolina. Poor silly! He simply has to serve me in spite of himself. What fun it is to make men do just what I want. There's this dear Knight, now. . . . If I chose, I could make him commit the wildest absurdities.

Servant. Madam Mirandolina.

Mirandolina. Well, my friend?

Servant. My master presents his compliments and sends to inquire how you are.

Mirandolina. Tell him that I'm very well.

Servant. He says, won't you drink a little of these Melissa spirits: they'll do you good. (He gives her a small golden bottle.)

Mirandolina. A gold bottle, isn't it?

Servant. Yes, madam—gold, I assure you.

Mirandolina. Why didn't he give me Melissa spirits when I was seized by that horrible fainting fit?

Servant. He hadn't the bottle then.

Mirandolina. And how does he come by it now?

Servant. Well . . . in confidence. . . . He sent me just now to bring a goldsmith; he bought that; paid twelve guineas for it; and then sent me to an apothecary to buy the spirits.

Mirandolina. Ha, ha, ha!

Servant. Laughing?

Mirandolina. Why, he sends me the medicine when I'm already cured.

Servant. It will serve for another occasion.

Mirandolina. Well, I'll drink a little as a safeguard. (Drinks.)

Here it is. Thank him for it. (Gives him the bottle.)

Servant. Oh, but the bottle is yours.

Mirandolina. Mine?

Servant. Yes. The master bought it on purpose.

Mirandolina. On purpose for me?

Servant. For you—but mum's the word!

Mirandolina. Take him the bottle and say that I thank him.

Servant. What do you mean?

Mirandolina. What I say: take it to him, for I won't have it.

Servant. You mean to offer him this affront?

Mirandolina. Not so much talk. Do as you're told. Take it.

Servant. That's the last straw! I'll take it. (What a woman!

To refuse twelve guineas! I've never seen her match—
and I'll have to work hard to find one.) (Exit.)

SCENE THREE

(MIRANDOLINA; then FABRIZIO.)

Mirandolina. So, then—he's cooked and toasted and baked!
As for what I've done to him, it wasn't done for self-
interest. I want him to admit the power of women without
being able to say that they are venal and self-seeking.

Fabrizio. Here's the iron.

Mirandolina. Is it really hot?

Fabrizio. Yes, madam—burning, like me.

Mirandolina. What has happened to you now?

Fabrizio. This Knight—he's been sending an embassy and presents. The servant told me.

Mirandolina. Yes, sir! He sent me a little gold bottle, and I sent it back to him.

Fabrizio. Sent it back?

Mirandolina. Ask the servant.

Fabrizio. Why did you send it back?

Mirandolina. Because—Fabrizio—I'm not going—
Let's talk of something else.

Fabrizio. Dear Mirandolina, have pity on me!

Mirandolina. Away you go! Let me do my ironing.

Fabrizio. I'm not preventing you from—

Mirandolina. Go and get another iron ready, and when it's hot, bring it here.

Fabrizio. Right. Believe me, if I speak——

Mirandolina. That's enough. You'll drive me mad.

Fabrizio. Well, I'll say no more. (She is a capricious mad-cap—but I wish well to her.) (Exit.)

Mirandolina. That was lucky, too. I've acquired merit with Fabrizio for having refused the gold bottle from the Knight. This is what they mean by knowing how to manage life, how to behave, how to turn everything to profit with a good grace, with refinement and with a touch of the expert. In point of courtesy, I don't want any one to say that I do a wrong to my sex.

SCENE FOUR

(MIRANDOLINA and the KNIGHT.)

Knight. (There she is. I don't wish to come, but the devil has driven me here.)

Mirandolina. (There he is, there he is.) (She sees him with the corner of her eye and begins to iron.)

Knight. *Mirandolina.*

Mirandolina (ironing). Oh, sir Knight! Your humble servant.

Knight. How are you?

Mirandolina (ironing). Very pleased to serve you.

Knight. You have given me cause for sorrow.

Mirandolina (glancing at him). How, sir?

Knight. By refusing a little bottle that I sent you.

Mirandolina (ironing). What did you wish me to do with it?

Knight. To make use of it at need.

Mirandolina (ironing). Luckily, I am not subject to swoons. What happened to me to-day has never happened before.

Knight. Dear *Mirandolina*—I should be sorry if I had been the cause of such a sad mischance.

Mirandolina (ironing). And yet I'm afraid you *were* the cause.

Knight (with passion). Was I—really?

Mirandolina (ironing furiously). You made me drink that horrid Borgogna, and it upset me.

Knight (mortified). What—d'you mean that?

Mirandolina (ironing). Precisely that. I shall never visit your room again.

Knight (amorously). I see what you mean. You'll never visit my room again? I understand the mystery—I understand it. Come here then, my dear, and you'll be happy.

Mirandolina. This iron's hardly warm. Ho, Fabrizio! If the other iron's hot, bring it here.

Knight. Be kind to me—accept the bottle.

Mirandolina. But honestly, Knight, I don't accept presents.

Knight. You took them from the Count of Albafiorita.

Mirandolina. I had to—so as not to annoy him.

Knight. But you don't mind annoying me by this hurt!

Mirandolina. What can it matter to you if a woman annoys you? Why, you can't bear women.

Knight. Ah, Mirandolina, I cannot say that now.

Mirandolina. Ah, Sir Knight—and when was the new moon?

Knight. It's not the moon that has changed me. It's a miracle—worked by your beauty and your charm.

Mirandolina (laughing as she irons). Ha, ha, ha!

Knight. You laugh?

Mirandolina. Ought I not to laugh? You tease me, and don't want me to laugh?

Knight. Oh, you sly one! I tease you, eh? Come—take my bottle.

Mirandolina (ironing). Thank you—no.

Knight. Take it—or you'll make me angry.

Mirandolina (calling loudly, with comic tone). Fabrizio—the iron!

Knight (vehemently). Will you accept it or not?

Mirandolina. Bother it, bother it!

(*She takes the bottle and throws it contemptuously into the laundry basket.*)

Knight. You throw it away like that?

Mirandolina. Fabrizio!

SCENE FIVE

(Those present, and FABRIZIO with an iron.)

Fabrizio. Here! (*He sees the Knight and becomes jealous.*)

Mirandolina. It's really hot?

Fabrizio. Yes, madam.

Mirandolina (*gently*). What is it? You look worried.

Fabrizio. Nothing, mistress, nothing.

Mirandolina. You're not ill?

Fabrizio. Give me the other iron, please, and I'll put it on the fire.

Mirandolina. Really, though, I'm afraid you're not well.

Knight. Come, give him the iron, and let him get out.

Mirandolina. But, you know, I *must* look after him. He's my devoted servant.

Knight (*frantically*). (I'm done then.)

Mirandolina. Take it, my dear, and make it hot. (*She gives the iron to Fabrizio.*)

Fabrizio (*tenderly*). Mistress——

Mirandolina. Quick, quick!

Fabrizio. (What does it mean? I'm at my wits' end.) (*Exit.*)

SCENE SIX

(The KNIGHT and MIRANDOLINA.)

Knight. Very polite, madam, to your servant!

Mirandolina. And what may you mean by that?

Knight. It's clear you dote on him.

Mirandolina (*ironing*). I—in love with a servant? You pay me a fine compliment, sir. I haven't such poor taste as that. If I meant to love I shouldn't throw away my time so cheaply.

Knight. You deserve the love of a king.

Mirandolina. The king of spades or the king of clubs?

Knight. Mirandolina, let's talk seriously, and cease joking.

Mirandolina. Go on, then. I'm listening.

Knight. Couldn't you stop ironing for a few minutes?

Mirandolina. I'm sorry. I *must* have this laundry spick and span by to-morrow.

Knight. Then you care more for the laundry than for me.

Mirandolina. Of course.

Knight. You really mean that?

Mirandolina. Why, yes. This laundry has done me good service, but I could never make anything out of you.

Knight. You could do what you liked with me.

Mirandolina. Oh, but you can't bear women.

Knight. Don't keep on tormenting me. You are quite sufficiently avenged. I respect you—I respect women of your sort, if there are any. I honour you, I love you, and I cry you mercy!

Mirandolina. Good, sir. We'll tell them that. (*She irons hurriedly and lets a muff fall. The Knight picks it up and gives it to her.*)

Knight. Do believe me——

Mirandolina. Don't trouble.

Knight. You deserve devotion.

Mirandolina. Ha, ha, ha!

Knight. Laughing?

Mirandolina. You mock me so!

Knight. Mirandolina—I am spent!

Mirandolina. Not ill?

Knight. Yes—I need something.

Mirandolina (*throwing him the bottle casually*). Try some of your Melissa spirits.

Knight. Don't treat me so cruelly. Believe me, I love you—I swear it! (*He tries to take her hand. She scalds him with the iron.*) Ow!

Mirandolina. I'm so sorry. I didn't do it on purpose.

Knight. Pooh—that's nothing. You have given me a much worse burn.

Mirandolina. Where, sir?

Knight. In my heart.

Mirandolina (*laughing*). Fabrizio!

Knight. For heaven's sake, don't call that fellow!

Mirandolina. But I need the other iron.

Knight. Wait . . . (but no!) . . . I will call my servant.

Mirandolina. Fabrizio!

Knight. If that fellow comes here, I swear I'll crack his skull.

Mirandolina. All very fine! Mayn't I employ my own servants?

Knight. Then call some one else. I can't stand the sight of that chap.

Mirandolina. I think you're coming a little too near, Sir
Knight. (*She keeps him at a distance from the table with the iron.*)

Knight. Have pity! I'm beside myself.

Mirandolina. I'll go to the kitchen, and then you'll be all right.

Knight. No, no, dear—stop!

Mirandolina (*crossing*). This is all very odd.

Knight. Pity me!

Mirandolina. Can't I call whom I choose?

Knight (*following her*). I admit it—I'm jealous of that fellow.

Mirandolina. (*Following me about like a dog!*)

Knight (*following*). This is the first time that I've known what love is.

Mirandolina (*walking away*). No one has ever ordered me about.

Knight (*following*). I don't mean to order you. I beg you.

Mirandolina (*turning haughtily*). What do you want from me?

Knight. Love, compassion, pity.

Mirandolina. A man who only this morning couldn't bear the sight of women is now asking for love and pity? I don't take you seriously—it's impossible—I don't believe you. (*Fume away! Squeak your best! You just learn to despise women!*)

(*Exit.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(*The KNIGHT alone.*)

Knight. Damn the moment when I began to admire that girl! I've fallen into the trap, and there's no cure.

SCENE EIGHT

(The KNIGHT and the MARQUIS.)

Marquis. Knight, you have insulted me!

Knight. I'm sorry. It was not intended.

Marquis. I'm amazed at you.

Knight. The glass didn't hit you, anyhow.

Marquis. A drop of water has stained my waistcoat.

Knight. I say again—I'm sorry.

Marquis. This is a gross impertinence.

Knight. I didn't do it on purpose. For the third time, I'm sorry.

Marquis. I require satisfaction.

Knight. If you won't excuse me, if you insist on having satisfaction—I am here. I am not going to be put upon by you.

Marquis (changing his tone). I'm afraid the stain won't come out. That's what made me angry.

Knight. When a gentleman has offered an apology, what more can he do?

Marquis. If you didn't do it to spite me, we will leave it at that.

Knight. I tell you that I'm prepared to give you satisfaction.

Marquis. Come, don't let's say any more about it.

Knight. You misbegotten swell!

Marquis. That's good! I've got over my anger and now you're angry.

Knight. You've caught me just at full moon.

Marquis. I sympathize. I know your malady.

Knight. I don't pry into your affairs.

Marquis. Mr. Woman-hater—you've succumbed, eh?

Knight. I?—how?

Marquis. Yes, you are in love . . .

Knight. The devil take you!

Marquis. What's the use of hiding it?

Knight. Leave me alone, or I swear you'll repent it.

(Exit.)

SCENE NINE

(The MARQUIS alone.)

Marquis. He is in love and he is ashamed of it, and wants no one to know. Or perhaps he wants no one to know because he is afraid of me. He hesitates to declare himself my rival. I'm exceedingly annoyed about this stain. If only I knew how to get it out. These women usually have some fuller's earth for removing stains. (*He searches on the table and in the basket.*) What a lovely little bottle! Gold or pinchbeck? Ah, it'll be pinchbeck. Were it gold it would not be lying here. If it contained Regina water it might serve to take out the stain. (*He opens it, smells it, and identifies it.*) Melissa spirits. All the better. I'll try it.

SCENE TEN

(The MARQUIS and DEJANIRA.)

Dejanira. What are you doing alone here, Marquis?
Does she never favour you?

Marquis. Ah, Countess! I just looked in to see her.

Dejanira. And what were you doing?

Marquis. I'll tell you. I am a great lover of cleanliness.
I wanted to remove this little stain.

Dejanira. With what, sir?

Marquis. These Melissa spirits.

Dejanira. Oh, but excuse me. Melissa spirits won't do it.
They'd only make it bigger.

Marquis. Then what should I do?

Dejanira. I've a secret for hiding stains.

Marquis. Will you be so good as to instruct me?

Dejanira. Delighted. For a sovereign I will undertake to remove that stain so that no one shall see where it was.

Marquis. A sovereign!

Dejanira. Yes, sir. Does that seem a lot to you?

Marquis. It would be better to try the Melissa spirits.

Dejanira (*offering to take the bottle*). May I? Is it pleasant?

Marquis. Delicious. Smell it. (*He gives her the bottle.*)

Dejanira. Indeed, I couldn't make better myself.

Marquis. Can you prepare spirits?

Dejanira. Yes, sir. I just adore them.

Marquis. Splendid, madam, splendid. I like that.

Dejanira. Is the bottle gold?

Marquis. What do you think? It's gold, all right. (*She can't tell gold from pinchbeck.*)

Dejanira. And is it yours, Marquis?

Marquis. Mine, yes—and yours, if you'd like it.

Dejanira (*pocketing it*). Oh, thank you. How kind!

Marquis. Of course, you're joking!

Dejanira. Why, didn't you offer it to me?

Marquis. But it's not your style. It's trumpery. I will get you something better, if you wish.

Dejanira. You astonish me. Why, it's really too *good*. Thank you, Marquis.

Marquis. Listen . . . between ourselves . . . it's not gold; it's pinchbeck.

Dejanira. All the better. I value it more than if it were gold. Besides, anything that comes from *your* hand is rare.

Marquis. Very well. I don't know what to say. Keep it, if it's worthy of you. (*Bother! I shall have to pay Mirandolina. What's it worth? Five shillings?*)

Dejanira. The Marquis is a most liberal gentleman.

Marquis. I'm ashamed to make a gift of anything so trashy. I could wish it were really gold.

Dejanira. But it does look exactly like gold. (*Takes it out and examines it.*) Every one will be deceived by it.

Marquis. True, any one who isn't a connoisseur of gold would be taken in, but I could tell it at once.

Dejanira. By its weight, even, it seems like gold.

Marquis. Still, it's not.

Dejanira. I must show it to my friend.

Marquis. Listen, Countess—don't show it to Mirandolina.

Tittle-tattle, you know. I think you understand me?

Dejanira. Perfectly. I'm only going to show it to Ortensia.

Marquis. To the Baroness?

Dejanira. That's right—the Baroness! (*Exit, laughing.*)

SCENE ELEVEN

(The MARQUIS; afterwards, the KNIGHT'S SERVANT.)

Marquis. She laughed, I suppose, because—with that charming way of hers—she got the bottle from me. If it were really gold, that would be something. It won't take much to put this right. Yes, if *Mirandolina* should want her bottle, I'll pay her for it—when I can.

Servant (*rummaging on the table*). Where on earth can that bottle be?

Marquis. What are you looking for, my good man?

Servant. A little bottle of *Melissa* spirits. *Madame Mirandolina* wants it. She says she left it here, but I can't find it.

Marquis. A little pinchbeck bottle?

Servant. No, sir—gold.

Marquis. Gold?

Servant (*hunting for it*). Yes, gold, sir. I saw it purchased for twelve guineas.

Marquis. (My word!) But how could a gold bottle be left about like that?

Servant. It might be overlooked,—but I can't find it.

Marquis. I don't think it can have been gold.

Servant. But it was, I tell you. Perhaps your Excellency has seen it?

Marquis. I? No, I've seen nothing.

Servant. Well, then. I must tell her that I can't find it. Her loss. She ought to have put it in her pocket. (*Exit.*)

SCENE TWELVE

(The MARQUIS; afterwards, the COUNT.)

Marquis. Oh, miserable *Marquis of Forlipopoli*! I've given away a bottle that is worth twelve guineas, and I gave it

away as being pinchbeck! How should I comport myself in a situation of this magnitude? If I retrieve the bottle from the Countess I shall make myself ridiculous in her eyes. If Mirandolina discovers that I have had it, my behaviour will come into question. I am a nobleman. I must pay her for it. But I have no money.

Count. Marquis, what say you of this new marvel?

Marquis. What new marvel?

Count. The boorish knight, the despiser of women—he's in love with Mirandolina.

Marquis. I am considering that. In spite of himself he recognizes the worth of this woman; he sees, too, that I shall not tolerate any one who is unworthy of her; so he must suffer and languish as a punishment for his impertinence.

Count. But if Mirandolina reciprocates his feeling?

Marquis. Impossible. She wouldn't do me such a wrong. She knows who I am. She knows what I do for her.

Count. I've done much more for her than you have. But it's all useless. Mirandolina encourages the Knight of Ripafratta. She has paid him attentions that she has never paid either you or me. It's clear that with women the more you do the less you receive. They mock at those who adore them and run after those who despise them.

Marquis. If that were true—but it can't be.

Count. Why not?

Marquis. Would you compare the Knight with me?

Count. But yourself, didn't you see her sitting at his table? She never did anything so intimate with us. His table the first to be served. Dainties made for him by her own hands. The servants see everything, and they talk. Fabrizio is boiling with jealousy. And what of that fainting-fit, whether real or feigned—wasn't it a plain manifesto of love?

Marquis. What? She gave him a savoury ragout—and me nothing but plain beef and rice-soup. You are quite right—this is a reflection upon my rank, my position.

Count. And what of me who have spent so much on her?

Marquis. And me who have given her present after present?

I even went so far as to give her some of my exquisite Cyprus wine to drink. The Knight hasn't done the very smallest part of what we have done for her.

Count. Don't you suppose that *he* hasn't given her presents!

Marquis. Why, what has he given her?

Count. A gold bottle of Melissa spirits.

Marquis. (Great heavens!) How do you know?

Count. His servant told me.

Marquis. (Worse and worse! I'm getting myself in trouble with the Knight.)

Count. I see now that she's an ingrate, and I mean to renounce her absolutely. I shall leave this unworthy inn immediately.

Marquis. You're quite right. You must go.

Count. And you—a nobleman of such standing—you ought to leave with me.

Marquis. But—but—where should I go?

Count. I'll find you other lodgings. Let me think.

Marquis. But these, you know—all the same, these are——

Count. We'll go to a house in my parts. We shall have no expenses there.

Marquis. All right. You're such a good friend that I can't say no to you.

Count. Let us go—and be avenged upon this thankless woman.

Marquis. Yes—let's go. (But how about the bottle, then? I am a gentleman, and cannot be guilty of a base act.)

Count. Don't repent of this, Marquis. Let's get away from here. Fall in with me in this, and afterwards I shall be yours to command in anything within my power.

Marquis. I say . . . in confidence . . . no one must hear of it. My bailiff sometimes delays the remittances . . .

Count. You owe her for something?

Marquis. Yes—twelve guineas.

Count. Twelve guineas? Then it must be months since you paid?

Marquis. That's how it stands—I owe her twelve guineas. I cannot leave without paying. If you could just oblige me——

Count. Delighted. Here they are. (*He takes out his purse.*)

Marquis. Wait. Now I remember—it's thirteen. (I shall have to give back his guinea to the Knight.)

Count. Twelve or thirteen, it's all the same to me. Take them.

Marquis. I'll pay you back as soon as possible.

Count. Keep them as long as you like. I've no lack of money—and to be avenged on her I'd spend a thousand crowns.

Marquis. Yes, she really is ungrateful. I've spent so much on her, and this is how she treats me!

Count. I mean to ruin the inn. I've made those two actresses leave also.

Marquis. What two actresses?

Count. The two that were here—Ortensia and Dejanira.

Marquis. What! They weren't ladies?

Count. No, no! Two comedy girls. Their company has arrived, and the fairy tale's at an end.

Marquis. (My bottle!) Where are they lodging?

Count. In a house by the theatre.

Marquis. (I'll go at once and get back the bottle.) (*Exit.*)

Count. That's the way I'll pay *him* out. And then there's the Knight, who play-acted in order to betray me. I'll present *his* bill in another way. (*Exit.*)

SCENE THIRTEEN

A Room with Three Doors.

(MIRANDOLINA alone.)

Mirandolina. It's dreadful. I'm in a wretched mess. If the Knight turns up, I'm done for. The devil's in him so horribly. I hope the devil won't tempt him to come here. I'll shut this door. (*She locks the door by which she had entered.*) I almost begin now to repent what I've done. Of course, it amused me no end to make him run after me

so madly—a conceited fellow like that, a despiser of women; but now that the furies have got hold of the satyr, I see that my reputation, and even my life, is in danger. I must form some big resolution here and now. I am alone—I have no one of any valour to defend me. There's only that good boy Fabrizio who could help me in this. I'll promise to marry him. . . . But—I've promised and promised, and he's weary of believing me. It might be better if I actually *did* marry him. I should say that by such a marriage I ought to be able to safeguard my interests and my good name without prejudicing my freedom.

SCENE FOURTEEN

(MIRANDOLINA, the KNIGHT without ;
and afterwards FABRIZIO.)

(*The Knight hammers on the door from outside.*)

Mirandolina. Hammering at this door? Whoever can it be?

Knight (without). Mirandolina!

Mirandolina. (Here's my friend.)

Knight. Mirandolina, let me in.

Mirandolina. (Let him in! I'm not such a fool.) What do you want, sir?

Knight. Open the door.

Mirandolina. Please go to your room, and wait for me. I've only just left you.

Knight. Why won't you open the door?

Mirandolina. Some visitors have arrived. Do me the kindness to go away, for I've only just left you.

Knight. All right. But if you don't come—look out!

(*He withdraws.*)

Mirandolina. 'If you don't come—look out'! I'd have to look out if I did go. It's getting worse and worse. We shall have to put it right, if that's possible. Has he gone? (*She peeps through the keyhole.*) Yes—he's gone. He's waiting for me in his room, but I shan't go. Ho—

Fabrizio! (*She goes to another door.*) It'll be fine if Fabrizio now avenges himself upon me and won't . . . Oh, but there's no danger. I've certain little tricks, certain little 'ways' with me, that would melt him if he were made of stone. (*Calling at another door.*) Fabrizio!

Fabrizio. Did you call me?

Mirandolina. Come here. I want to confide in you.

Fabrizio. I am ready.

Mirandolina. You know that the Knight of Ripafratta has found that he is in love with me.

Fabrizio. Of course I've noticed that.

Mirandolina. You have? You'd noticed it? Honestly, I had never seen it at all.

Fabrizio. Poor innocent! Hadn't noticed it! Didn't you see the symptoms that he showed while you were ironing, and how jealous he was of me?

Mirandolina. I am not designing myself, and so I always accept everything without suspicion. Well, just now, Fabrizio, he said things to me which—really—made me blush!

Fabrizio. Look you—he said them because you are a young single woman without father or mother or any one. It wouldn't happen like this if you were married.

Mirandolina. I see now what you mean. I have been thinking about marriage.

Fabrizio. Remember your father.

Mirandolina. I am remembering him.

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Those present; and without, the KNIGHT.)

(*The Knight beats at the door to which he first came.*)

Mirandolina. Somebody knocking!

Fabrizio. Who's there?

Knight. Open the door!

Mirandolina. The Knight!

Fabrizio (*going to open the door*). What does *he* want?

Mirandolina. Wait till I go.

Fabrizio. What are you frightened of?

Mirandolina. Fabrizio—I don't know—I'm afraid for my virtue. (*Exit.*)

Fabrizio. Never fear. I'll defend you.

Knight. Open the door—by heaven!

Fabrizio. What do you want, sir? What do these shouts mean? One doesn't behave like this at a respectable inn.

Knight. Open! (*He is heard trying to force the door.*)

Fabrizio. The devil! He mustn't burst it. Men, men—who's there? No one about?

SCENE SIXTEEN

(*FABRIZIO: the MARQUIS and the COUNT entering by the middle door.*)

Count (at the door). What's the matter?

Marquis (with him). What is this noise?

Fabrizio (softly, so that the Knight shall not hear). Gentlemen, I beseech you—the Knight is trying to force that door.

Knight. Open—or I'll break it down.

Marquis. Suppose he's gone mad? (*To the Count.*) Let's go away.

Count. Open it. I've a few words to say to him.

Fabrizio. I'll open it, but I do beg you——

Count. That's all right. We're here.

Marquis. (*If he's after me, I'm off.*)

(*Fabrizio opens the door and the Knight enters.*)

Knight. Zounds! Where is she?

Fabrizio. Whom are you seeking, sir?

Knight. Mirandolina. Where is she?

Fabrizio. I couldn't say.

Marquis. (*That's all right. He wants Mirandolina.*)

Knight. The villain! I'll find her. (*He stalks about and discovers the Count and the Marquis.*)

Count. With whom is your business?

Marquis. You and I are friends, Knight.

Knight. (Damn! I wouldn't have any one see my weakness for all the world.)

Fabrizio. What do you want, sir, with the mistress?

Knight. It's not for me to render account to you. When I give an order I expect it to be obeyed. It's for this that I pay my money, and before God she'll have something to reckon up with me.

Fabrizio. Sir, you pay money for legitimate and honest service, but you've no grounds for pretending—if you'll excuse me—that an honourable woman . . .

Knight. What's that you're saying? What do *you* know about it? You have nothing to do with my affairs. I know what orders I gave her.

Fabrizio. You ordered her to wait on you in your room.

Knight. Get out, you swine—or I'll smash your skull.

Fabrizio. I'm amazed at you——

Marquis (to Fabrizio). Sh!

Count (to Fabrizio). Go along!

Knight. Out you get! (*To Fabrizio.*)

Fabrizio (warming up). I say, sir——

Marquis. Away with you!

Count. Away with you!

(*The^v chase him out.*)

Fabrizio. (Great heavens! I'm only too glad to fly!) (*Exit.*)

SCENE SEVENTEEN

(*The KNIGHT, the MARQUIS, and the COUNT.*)

Knight. (Disgraceful! To let me hang about in my room!)

Marquis (to Count). What the devil's the matter with him?

Count (to Marquis). Can't you see? He's in love with Mirandolina.

Knight. (And she has dealings with Fabrizio! Does she talk to him of marriage?)

Count. Now's the time to be avenged.—Sir Knight, it is not

becoming to laugh at the weaknesses of others when one has a heart as fragile as yours.

Knight. What are you talking about?

Count. I know the cause of your madness.

Knight (to Marquis). Do you know what he means?

Marquis. My dear friend, I know nothing.

Count. I am referring to you—you that, saying you couldn't endure women, have tried to steal away Mirandolina's heart when she was already my conquest.

Knight (turning to Marquis). I?

Marquis. I'm not saying anything.

Count. Face me. Answer me. Perhaps you're ashamed of your vile behaviour?

Knight. I am ashamed to listen any further without telling you that you lie.

Count. You say I've lied?

Marquis. (Worse and worse!)

Knight. What reason have you for affirming this? (*Angrily, to the Marquis.*) The Count doesn't know what he's saying.

Marquis. I have no wish to be mixed up in all this.

Count. You're a liar!

Marquis. (I'm off!) (*He tries to go.*)

Knight (holding him by force). Stop!

Count. And give me satisfaction!

Knight. Very good—I will. (*To Marquis.*) Lend me your sword.

Marquis. Come, come, calm yourselves, both of you. My dear Count, what does it matter to you if the Knight does love Mirandolina?

Knight. I—love her? It's not true. Whoever says that, lies.

Marquis. Lies? The lie doesn't fall to me. It's not I who say it.

Knight. Who is it, then?

Count. I say it, and I maintain it, and I won't be put upon by you.

Knight (to Marquis). You'll let me have your sword?

Marquis. No.

Knight. Are you my enemy also?

Marquis. I'm friends with everybody.

Count. This behaviour's disgusting.

Knight. Ah—be damned to you! (*He tugs at the Marquis's sword, which comes out with the sheath.*)

Marquis (to Knight). Do you treat me with no respect?

Knight. If you call that an offence, I will give you satisfaction also.

Marquis. Come—you are so hasty. (*Grieving to himself.*)
All very unpleasant. . . .

Count. I require satisfaction. (*Puts himself on guard.*)

Knight. You shall have it. (*He tries to draw the sword, but cannot.*)

Marquis. You don't know that sword——

Knight (struggling to get it out). Damnation!

Marquis. Knight, you'll achieve nothing——

Count. I can't wait any longer.

Knight. Here. . . . (*He pulls out the sword and finds that it is a mere stump.*) What's this?

Marquis. You've broken my sword!

Knight. Well, where's the rest of it? There's nothing in the sheath.

Marquis. You're quite right. I remember now. I broke it in my last duel.

Knight (to Count). Allow me to get a sword.

Count. Zounds, sir! You don't escape my hands!

Knight. Escape? I'm prepared to confront you with this mere remnant.

Marquis. Never fear—it's a Spanish blade.

Count. Not so much swaggering, Mr. Blusterer!

Knight. I say, with this mere remnant. (*He rushes at the Count.*)

Count (on the defensive). Back, back!

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(Those present, MIRANDOLINA, and FABRIZIO.)

Fabrizio. My masters, put up, put up!

Mirandolina. Gentlemen, put up your swords!

Count (seeing Mirandolina). (Vile woman!)

Mirandolina. Oh dear, oh dear! With swords too!

Marquis. You see? And you are the cause!

Mirandolina. I the cause—how?

Count. This Knight, here—he's in love with you.

Knight. I in love? It's not true. You're lying.

Mirandolina. The Knight in love with me? Oh no, Count, you are mistaken. You are mistaken, I do assure you.

Count. Why, you yourself have shown him——

Marquis. We know it, we've seen it!

Knight (angrily, to the Marquis). What do you know? What have you seen?

Marquis. I say that if it is so, we know it. . . . If it isn't, we've not seen it.

Mirandolina. The Knight in love with me? He denies it—denies it in my presence. He shames me, reviles me, makes me understand my weakness and his inflexibility. I admit the truth—that if I had succeeded in making him love me I should think I had achieved the greatest wonder of the world. One cannot hope to arouse love in a man who can't endure women, who despises them, who has such a low opinion of them. Gentlemen, I am a simple straightforward woman. I speak when I must, and I cannot conceal the truth. I tried to make the Knight love me, but I accomplished nothing. Isn't that true, sir? I tried and tried, and I could do nothing.

Knight. (What can I say?)

Count (to Mirandolina). You see? He's dumfounded.

Marquis (to Mirandolina). He simply can't say No.

Knight (angrily, to Marquis). You don't know what you're talking about.

Marquis (sweetly). You're *always* going for me.

Mirandolina. Oh, the Knight's not in love. He knows our arts. He knows the cunning of women, doesn't believe what they say, and puts no trust in their tears. Even when they swoon, he laughs.

Knight. Are the tears of women false, then, and their swoons mere lies?

Mirandolina. You don't know that? Or are you pretending not to know?

Knight. Heavens above! Such duplicity deserves a dagger in the heart!

Mirandolina. You mustn't get angry, Knight, or these gentlemen will say that you're really in love.

Count. He is, and he can't hide it.

Marquis. It's plain in his eyes.

Knight (to Marquis). I'm not!

Marquis. Me again!

Mirandolina. No, sir, he is not in love. I say it, I repeat it, and I am ready to prove it.

Knight. (I'm done.) Count, another time you will find me provided with a sword. (*He throws away the stump of the Marquis's sword.*)

Marquis (picking it up). Look out! The hilt cost money.

Mirandolina. Defend your reputation, Knight. These gentlemen believe that you are in love. You must disabuse their minds.

Knight. There's no necessity.

Mirandolina. Oh, sir, there is. You can do it in a minute.

Knight. (What is she driving at?)

Mirandolina. Gentlemen, the surest sign of love is jealousy; and if you feel no jealousy, you are not in love. If the Knight loved me he couldn't bear me to be another's, but he will accept that, and you shall realize—

Knight. Whose do you mean to be?

Mirandolina. His for whom my father destined me.

Fabrizio. Do you mean me?

Mirandolina. Yes, dear Fabrizio. In the presence of these gentlemen I give you my hand in marriage.

Knight. (Good Lord! Him! I can't stand that!)

Count. (She marries Fabrizio—she doesn't love the Knight.)
Yes, marry away, and I promise you three hundred pounds.

Marquis. Mirandolina—better an egg to-day than a chicken to-morrow. Marry at once, and I'll give you twelve guineas on the spot.

Mirandolina. Thank you, gentlemen—I have no need of a dowry. I am a poor woman, with no style, no brilliance, and quite inadequate to love people of quality. But Fabrizio is fond of me, and here and now, in your presence, I take him—

Knight. Be damned to you, then—and marry whom you will. I know now that you tricked me, I know that you are inwardly congratulating yourself upon having brought me so low, and I see the extremity to which you would like to stretch my forbearance. You deserve a smack in the face for your deception; you deserve to have your heart wrenched out and shown up as an example to all deceitful and flattering women. But if I did that, I should debase myself yet further. I flee from your eyes. I curse your tears, your beguilements, your falsehoods. You have made me understand the disastrous power which your sex can have upon us, and you have taught me to my cost that, in order to overcome you, we must not merely hold you in contempt but flee from the very sight of you. (*Exit.*)

SCENE NINETEEN

(MIRANDOLINA, the COUNT, the MARQUIS, and FABRIZIO.)

Count. And he said just now that he wasn't in love.

Marquis. If he tells me another falsehood I shall question his gentility.

Mirandolina. Sh, gentlemen, sh! He's gone, and if he doesn't come back, if I get out of it like this, I shall think myself lucky. Poor man—he succeeded all too well in loving me, and he caused me to run a very unpleasant risk. I don't wish for another.—Fabrizio! Come, my dear, give me your hand.

Fabrizio. My hand! Just a moment, madam. You amuse yourself by making people fall in love with you like this, and then you expect me to want to marry you!

Mirandolina. Don't be a silly. It was only a joke, a caprice, a prank. I was a girl; I had no one to control me. I know what I'll do when I'm married.

Fabrizio. What?

LAST SCENE

(Those present and the KNIGHT'S SERVANT.)

Servant. Madam, I came to see you before leaving.

Mirandolina. You are going away?

Servant. Yes. My master has rushed to the post to have the horses put in. He's waiting for me to bring the luggage, and we're going to Leghorn.

Mirandolina. I am sorry if you haven't been——

Servant. I've no time to dally. I thank you, and I present my respects. (Exit.)

Mirandolina. Thank heaven—he has gone! I do feel a little bit repentant—for he's gone with a bad taste in his mouth. Never again will I stir up such furies.

Count. Mirandolina, whether you are maiden or married, I shall be just the same to you.

Marquis. And you may bank upon my protection. ←

Mirandolina. Gentlemen, now that I am marrying I do not require protectors or passion or presents. Till now I have amused myself, and I've behaved badly, and I've risked too much, and I don't mean to do it ever again. Here is my husband.

Fabrizio. But please, madam——

Mirandolina. Please? What's all this? Where is the difficulty? Let us go. Give me your hand.

Fabrizio. I should like us first to exchange our agreements.

Mirandolina. What agreements? The agreement is this—either you give me your hand or you return to your own country.

Fabrizio. I'll give you my hand—but afterwards . . .

Mirandolina. Afterwards, my dear, I shall be altogether yours. Don't doubt me. I shall always love you. You shall be my soul.

Fabrizio (giving her his hand). Take it, dear. I've no choice.
Mirandolina. (So that's come right too.)

Count. Mirandolina, you are a great woman. You've enough skill to steer men wherever you wish.

Marquis. Really, your manner is infinitely ingratiating.

Mirandolina. If I may hope, then, for a kindness from you gentlemen, there is one—the last one—for which I would ask you.

Count. Just say it.

Marquis. Speak out.

Fabrizio. (What is she going to ask for now?)

Mirandolina. I ask you, then, as an act of good-will to find yourselves another inn.

Fabrizio. (Excellent! I see now that she'll behave well to me.)

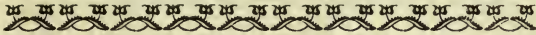
Count. I understand. I commend you. I'll go—but be certain that wherever I am you will have my respect.

Marquis. Tell me—did you mislay a little gold bottle?

Mirandolina. Why, yes, sir.

Marquis. Here it is. I found it, and I restore it to you. In order to fall in with you, I shall go away, but pray rely upon my protection in any place.

Mirandolina. I shall treasure these kind expressions to the very bound of propriety and good faith. As I change my state, so I shall change my habits. You also may profit, gentlemen, by what you have witnessed, to the advantage and the greater security of your hearts. Whenever you are in doubt, whether you ought to yield or to withstand, reflect upon the bitter fruits of experience, and remember the hostess of the inn.



THE IMPRESARIO
FROM SMYRNA

A COMEDY
IN FIVE ACTS



First produced in
Venice during the
Carnival of 1761

Translated by CLIFFORD BAX



CHARACTERS

- ALL, *a Turk, a Rich Merchant from Smyrna.*
CARLUCCIO, *known as the Bit of Bran, a (male) Soprano.*
LUCREZIA, *a Florentine Singer, known as the Lemonader.*
TOGNINA, *a Venetian Singer, known as the Little Pumpkin.*
ANNINA, *a Bolognese Singer, known as the Chestnut.*
PASQUALINO, *a Tenor, Friend of Tognina.*
COUNT LASCA, *a Patron of Musicians.*
MACCARIO, *a Penurious and Bad Poet.*
NIBIO, *an Operatic Agent.*
FABRIZIO, *a Scene-Painter.*
BELTRAME, *an Innkeeper.*
A MAN-SERVANT, *from another Inn.*

CHARACTERS WHO DO NOT SPEAK

- AN OLD WOMAN, *Mother of Annina.*
A YOUNG MAN, *Brother of Annina.*
A MAN-SERVANT, *belonging to Annina.*
A MAN-SERVANT, *belonging to Lucrezia.*

Painters, Stage Hands, Men to Work the Lights, Door-keepers, two Pages, a Prompter, Ticket Sellers, Box Attendants, and other persons named in Act III, scene xi.

THE SCENE IS AT VENICE



THE IMPRESARIO FROM SMYRNA

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

The Parlour of Beltrame's Inn.

(Present, BELTRAME arranging the furniture of the room.

Enter COUNT LASCA.)

Lasca. Good day, Beltrame.

Beltrame. Your humble servant, Count. What can I do for you?

Lasca. I hear that yesterday some musicians arrived at your inn. Is that so?

Beltrame. Yes, sir. A soprano and a lady.

Lasca. Who is the soprano?

Beltrame. A certain Carluccio . . .

Lasca. Who's known as 'the Bit of Bran'?

Beltrame. I believe he is.

Lasca. I know him,—a young fellow of some ability, but outrageously conceited. I play the patron to him because, if he wants to, he might turn out well; but in order to knock a little sense into him one simply must treat him harshly—in fact, humiliate him. Last Carnival time I sent him to Genoa, but I gather that, owing to the airs he put on, the Genoese managers had little reason to thank me. And the lady, who is she?

Beltrame. The lady is Signora Lucrezia Giuggioli, a Florentine, known as the Lemonader.

Lasca. Lemonader? What the devil does that mean?

Beltrame. Don't you know, sir, that in Florence the coffee-

house keepers are called Lemonaders? I suppose she's the daughter of some one in that business.

Lasca. Ah, very likely. And can she sing?

Beltrame. I don't know, sir. I haven't heard her.

Lasca. Anyway, she's pretty?

Beltrame. Not bad.

Lasca. And has she been long in Venice?

Beltrame. I think not.

Lasca. Well now, could I pay her a visit?

Beltrame. She's in that room over there—but it's too early yet.

Lasca. Still asleep?

Beltrame. I understand that she's awake now, but it'll be two hours before she's in a condition to receive visitors.

Lasca. Ah, she'll have to make up first.

Beltrame. No doubt. If you saw her now, it's quite likely that you wouldn't know her again in two or three hours.

Lasca. Very good. I'll come back later. Meanwhile, you be my ambassador. Tell her that a gentleman desires to see her.

Beltrame. She'll respond with alacrity. In fact, she did me the honour—I tell you in confidence—of asking me to make her acquainted with some gentleman. You can come to offer her your protection.

Lasca. She can have all the protection that she wants, but if she thinks to fleece me she's mistaken. I busy myself with musicians, I help them, I procure them advantages, but—they don't feed off *me*!

Beltrame. Excellent! It's a good thing to be on your guard. Here's an instance that occurred—three days ago, in this very inn—to a gentleman from Bologna. He'd squandered as much as he could, and more, on a young singer, and finding that she had been engaged for a concert in another district, he arrived here by the same coach. They dined together. After dinner the young woman asked for some water—to wash her hands with. She washed them, went to the window, threw the water into the canal, turned to her adoring lover, looked at him, laughed, and finally paid

him this pretty compliment: 'I am not in Bologna now, but in Venice. I wash my hands of all Bolognese people and chuck their memory into the canal.' For some time the poor young fellow remained motionless, without speaking. Then he said, 'Ungrateful creature! But I deserve no better. You shall never see me again;' and having said that, he went out like a man in despair, accompanied only by her derisive laughter.

Lasca. Poor man! A sad case, but not a new one.

Beltrame. By your leave, sir—they're calling me. *(Exit.)*

SCENE TWO

(COUNT LASCA alone.)

Lasca. I don't blame the lady for having discarded the Bolognese, but only for the crude way in which she did it. For the rest, every one knows that these women, accustomed to go about from one place to another, are quite ready to run a love-affair just for a week; and you're lucky if you can even say, 'While I had her, she was loyal.'

SCENE THREE

(COUNT LASCA and CARLUCCIO.)

Carluccio. Count, my service.

Lasca. Oh! Signor Carluccio—we meet again! So you've come back from Genoa. How did your operas go? Were you pleased with the place?

Carluccio. Never again to Genoa—not if they dragged me with chains.

Lasca. Why?

Carluccio. The manager there treated me so atrociously that I'd rather have been flogged. I was the one success. Everybody was enchanted by my voice, and for that reason the ungrateful, avaricious manager tried to force me to sing every evening. I was so hopelessly in love with the leading lady that I could not sing when she was unkind to

me. The manager knew all about it, but instead of sympathizing he just went on doing his utmost to make me tire out my lungs. Just think what the dog did! It was agreed—and confirmed by contract—that for every song that I left out I should lose two guineas of my salary, with the result that, in order not to sing for nothing, I had to be singing the whole time.

Lasca. Oh, excellent manager! Oh, admirable manager! If all you musicians were treated by your managers thus, how much less dissatisfied you'd be, and how much less often you'd have colds! A gentleman goes out to spend his money understanding that he will enjoy the lovely voice of Signor Canary or Signor Nightingale, and merely because the fair one will not look at them they are too ill and cannot sing. The audience kicks up a row, the receipts fall off—and the manager pays. But here was fine justice. Good luck to that Genoese manager in the future!

Carluccio. What you say, sir, doesn't apply to an artist of my standing. My sort is not treated in that way. I sing when I feel like it, and every time that I do sing is worth a hundred.

Lasca. If you go on like that, my dear Carluccio, you won't be employed very often.

Carluccio. I never seek out any one. I keep up my prestige, and managers have more need of me than I of them.

Lasca. I gather that you're simply laden with riches? You've had such a series of triumphs in such a little time.

Carluccio. Oh, I'm still in my prime. I haven't amassed much, but as time goes on I shall.

Lasca. Well now, how much have you at present?

Carluccio. At present . . . at present . . . I have not a farthing, and I had to leave my bag with the courier. . . . But what does that signify? I shan't lack for a fortune.

Lasca. Splendid, really! You're penniless, and yet you already begin to despise engagements. First establish yourself, get money, and then you can do what the others do; then you can say, 'I want a thousand guineas, and I'll sing when I feel inclined.'

Carluccio. Pray, Count, do you think you will have any opportunity of getting me a job?

Lasca. Would you go to Mantua?

Carluccio. To Mantua? Why not? As first soprano, of course.

Lasca. But as second?

Carluccio. Oh no! not that.

Lasca. The first is already booked—and I know he's a tip-top singer.

Carluccio. I give precedence to no one.

Lasca. You make me smile. You're so conceited that I've a good mind to leave you to yourself and not bother about you any more; but I'm sorry for you, and I wish you success—though you don't deserve it! Consider: the time's getting on, and if you don't accept this engagement, it's quite likely that you won't get one this year.

Carluccio. What is the fee?

Lasca. Last year, I know, they gave the second soprano a hundred guineas, but this year. . . .

Carluccio. Very well! Let them give me three hundred and I'll accept the engagement. I'll regard it as a holiday in the country.

Lasca. I was going to say that this year their expenses are immense, and they couldn't go beyond fifty.

Carluccio. At that price they can give the job to a hack. People like me don't sing for fifty guineas.

Lasca. Good. So you'll continue to do nothing?

Carluccio. I never like that—it's such bad practice.

Lasca. Excellent—you'll take fifty?

Carluccio. The best I can do is to put up with two hundred.

Lasca. There's nothing to be done, then. The arrangements are made.

Carluccio. All right. This time I'll sing for nothing. They can give me a hundred.

Lasca. It's useless to think of it.

Carluccio. Suppose they give me eighty?

Lasca. D'you mean that? I must say, you make me cross.

Carluccio. Count, is this manager really hard pressed?

Lasca. Yes. He's a friend of mine. I want to do him a good turn, but I'm doing this still more on your behalf.

Carluccio. Let's say no more about it. I will accept fifty guineas—just to please the Count; but for the sake of my reputation I shall require a sham contract for five hundred—with a banker's warrant too.

Lasca. Right! To please your vanity, you shall have the contract. And as for the fee, I'll settle that.

Carluccio. We couldn't have any money on account?

Lasca. I'll write to the manager.

Carluccio. You couldn't oblige me yourself, sir?

Lasca. I'm not the paymaster.

Carluccio. But you'll lend me—say, just six guineas?

Lasca. I must be going. . . . We'll talk about it later.

Carluccio. If you'd be so kind as to . . .

Lasca. Yes, yes, we'll meet again. (Exit.)

SCENE FOUR

(CARLUCCIO alone.)

Carluccio. This charming Count! He actually refused me a loan of six guineas—being afraid that I shouldn't pay it back. As if six guineas were a great sum! Why, when I have them I spend as much on a luncheon. True, I have some debts, but I shall pay them—or I shan't; for as the proverb says, 'Time and straw will ripen me.' If I go to Portugal or Russia I shall bring back treasures—I shall come home really rich, and build palaces—not castles in the air but large magnificent palaces on *terra firma*, and have stupendous possessions—perhaps a county, or maybe a marquise—*and* a colossal fortune. Let Count Lasca come *then*, and offer me an engagement at fifty guineas!

SCENE FIVE

(CARLUCCIO and BELTRAME.)

Beltrame. (I don't know if Signora Lucrezia is yet in a condition . . .)

Carluccio. Ah, the barman.

Beltrame. The innkeeper, at your service.

Carluccio. Send to the mail from Bologna for my box.

Beltrame. Certainly. But will they give it up without question?

Carluccio. They'll give it up. Pay the courier two guineas. I owe him that for the journey.

Beltrame. If you please, sir . . .

Carluccio. And give eight shillings as a tip to the courier's men.

Beltrame. Please, sir, you said . . .

Carluccio. Quick about it, my man.

Beltrame. At your service. But may I ask you for the money?

Carluccio. You pay it. I'll pay you the lot together.

Beltrame. But excuse me . . .

Carluccio. You know me, good barman.

Beltrame. I am not a barman but an innkeeper, and I have not the honour of knowing you. (I know him all too well.)

Carluccio. Barman or innkeeper, whichever you are, you're a blockhead if you don't know a man of my position.

Beltrame. I know very well that you are an artist of ability, reputation, and great wealth, but I have no money to lend to any one.

Carluccio. Blockhead! I don't ask you to *lend* the money.

Beltrame. Then give me the two-pound-ten . . .

Carluccio. Don't irritate me. Send for my bag.

Beltrame. I shan't send for anything.

Carluccio. It'd serve you right if I left your inn.

Beltrame. My inn is in need of no one.

Carluccio. Great heavens! Send for my bag.

Beltrame. You amaze me.

Carluccio. And you me, fellow.

Beltrame. 'Fellow' indeed!

Carluccio. 'Fellow' or 'my man,' I treat you as you deserve.

Beltrame. Very good, my man.

SCENE SIX

(Those present and LUCREZIA.)

Lucrezia. What's all this row about? What's the matter, Signor Carluccio?

Carluccio. Oh, my dear Lucrezia, my goddess, my queen—how are you? How did you sleep last night?

Lucrezia. Badly enough. My room is above the canal, and the smell of the canal offends me.

Carluccio. Host, you'll have to change Signora Lucrezia's room.

Beltrame. I have no other room to give her. And any one not pleased is at liberty to go—particularly any one who takes my inn for a public-house.

Carluccio. All right, all right, keep quiet. I specially want this lady to be satisfied. If you agree, I'll give her my room and go over into hers. You'll find, Signora, that you'll be pleased with my room. Carry the goods over at once. Look alive, my man . . . I mean, mine host. Call up some of your men, and tell them to take the lady's things into my room, and as for mine . . . Send for my bag.

Beltrame. I tell you frankly . . .

Carluccio (to Lucrezia). Beauteous One, if you are agreeable, let us spend most of our time together.

Lucrezia. I shall be charmed. I hate being alone, and your society amuses me.

Carluccio (to Beltrame). My friend, look after us well. Good luncheon, good supper. The best of everything the country affords, and, above all, good wine and good spirits. We are accustomed to living in splendour. Look after us, and fear nothing. I'll pay.

Beltrame. But, sir, I . . .

Carluccio (to Lucrezia). I want us to be gay for the little time we shall put up here, while we are looking out for a good engagement.

Lucrezia. To tell you the truth, I am not now in a position to incur any great expense.

Carluccio. Don't bother your head about it. Leave it all to me. You are my Princess. (*To Beltrame.*) Did you hear, my friend?

Beltrame. Let us speak plainly, sir.

Carluccio. You're doing honour to yourself. You're doing honour to your inn—this celebrated, famous, renowned inn. You stand first among the innkeepers of Europe, and we are two artists who can benefit you.

Beltrame. Excuse me, but that's all nothing to me. I am an honest man who looks after his own affairs and doesn't wish . . .

Carluccio. Come, come, less insolence and more respect. My dear Lucrezia, shall we go and amuse ourselves?

Lucrezia. Just as you like.

Carluccio. Would you care for a gondola? (*To Beltrame.*) Quickly, send for a gondola with two rowers.

Beltrame. Send for it yourself.

Carluccio. What's the meaning of this impertinence? I expect good service. I pay, I pay well, and I mean to be well served.

Beltrame. If you pay . . . (*looking off*). (Ah! here's the Count.)

Carluccio. And don't make me angry, for when I'm roused . . .

Beltrame. Madam, there's a gentleman wishes to see you.

Lucrezia. What gentleman?

Beltrame. Count Lasca, a friend and patron of artists.

Carluccio. (Count Lasca!) Madam, till we meet! (*Exit.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(LUCREZIA AND BELTRAME.)

Lucrezia. Good-bye, Signor Carluccio. (*To Beltrame.*) How quickly he vanished!

Beltrame. (I know well enough why he vanished. I hear he's afraid of the Count.) Will you receive the Count?

Lucrezia. I shall be delighted.

Beltrame. Will you go into your room?

Lucrezia. The bed isn't made yet. I'll receive him here.

Beltrame. As you wish. This room is private. I'll ask him to come in.

Lucrezia. Stay—tell me, is he rich?

Beltrame. Pretty well off.

Lucrezia. Is he generous?

Beltrame. That I can't tell you. I leave you to experiment for yourself. (*Exit.*)

SCENE EIGHT

(*LUCREZIA; and afterwards the COUNT.*)

Lucrezia. In a new country you must be able to make capital out of some one. As for Carluccio, I know what he is, and there's little to hope from him—a great deal of smoke and very little fire.

Lasca. Madam, your humble servant.

Lucrezia. Your devoted servant, sir.

Lasca. Forgive me if I have dared . . .

Lucrezia. Sir, you have done me a kindness. Pray take a chair.

(*They sit down.*)

Lasca. You are a Florentine, they tell me.

Lucrezia. At your service.

Lasca. And your name is Lucrezia?

Lucrezia. Yes, sir—'Crezzina, in all obedience.

Lasca. Have you been in the profession long?

Lucrezia. Oh, excuse me—it couldn't be for long. Hardly any time. You can see from my age. . . . I've only sung at Pisa. They intended to shut me up in Leghorn, but I wanted to get out of my district, and my great desire is to be heard in Venice.

Lasca. If you're looking out for a good engagement, it won't be long, I hope, before I shall have a chance of being able to procure you one that would give you a real opening—either in Venice or in Lombardy. I am acquainted with all the most famous managers in Italy, all the music agents,

and all the artists—and I treat them in the kindly spirit which they deserve.

Lucrezia. I hope you won't be displeased with my talent. Indeed, I hope that possibly your friends will thank you.

Lasca. I am perfectly sure they will. And are you a soprano or a contralto?

Lucrezia. Oh, sir! how can you? I should be ashamed to sing contralto. I am a soprano. A very high soprano. You can't find many voices like mine.

Lasca. I'm immensely encouraged to hear that. Did you sing first or second soprano at Pisa?

Lucrezia. I'll tell you. It was the first time I'd come out, and that booby of a manager gave me only a tiny part; but once I'd sung, they thought of me so highly that I simply hunted the first soprano under the table. There was always a row going on when the others were singing, but when I sang everybody was first silent, and then applauded like mad. Perhaps you remember that wonderful air:

‘ Uttering her complaint
The turtle-dove goes by.’

Lasca. Would you be so good as to let me hear that beautiful air?

Lucrezia. I should gladly oblige you, but the spinet which the innkeeper has sent up to my room is so frightfully out of tune.

Lasca. What does that matter? I'll hear it without the spinet.

Lucrezia. Oh, pardon me, sir. I never sing without an accompaniment. I hope you don't take me for a back-row singer.

Lasca. Forgive me, and don't be angry. Whether you sing or not, I am your devoted servant; but I tell you for your own good that I give most consideration to artists who are obliging and do not require to be pressed.

Lucrezia. Oh! I am not of that kind. I pride myself on being most obliging.

Lasca. Very good. If that's so, be kind enough to sing me some little piece—just to let me hear your voice.

Lucrezia. Pardon me, I cannot. I have just made a journey, and I have a terrible cold.

Lasca. Excellent! I expected that too; having a cold is the usual excuse.

Lucrezia (with some feigned tenderness). No, really—if you will do me the honour of calling upon me, you will see that I am sincere and accommodating—indeed, my weakness is being sometimes a little *too* obliging. When any one has a kind feeling for me—believe me, sir, I am sensible of it.

Lasca. (I see. Young, but she knows her business!) And I in turn assure you, madam, that I am entirely at your disposal. I am a real friend, and when I like some one I don't fail her.

Lucrezia. Then, if you please, can you tell me of a good hairdresser who would arrange my hair?

Lasca. Ah, I don't know any one of that sort. I have mine done by my valet.

Lucrezia. Perhaps you would lend me your valet?

Lasca. He is no good for ladies.

Lucrezia. And, sir, a shoemaker?

Lasca. Ah, as for a shoemaker—you'd better ask the inn-keeper. I know he has one—an excellent man—who works for the inn, but I can't say where he lives or what his name is.

Lucrezia. (It's plain I am beaten here.)

Lasca. (There's nothing to be had out of me.)

SCENE NINE

(Those present and NIBIO.)

Nibio. I bow most humbly to Signora Lucrezia. Count, your servant.

Lucrezia (to Lasca). Who is this man and how does he know me?

Lasca. This is Signor Nibio, a most approved gentleman and much experienced, a great connoisseur of the theatre and a famous agent for artists.

Nibio. The Count is too kind.

Lasca. My friend, if you have any opening for a singer, I assure you that this lady is of infinite talent. She has an astonishing voice, clear and perfect as a silver bell. She is a musician through and through, and—what is still more admirable—she never has a cold.

Nibio. Most excellent material to build on.

Lucrezia. (The Count's poking fun at me, that's clear.)

Nibio. If the Count has heard her, I am assured of her ability, and need ask no more.

Lasca. She's a prodigy, I promise you. And another admirable quality in her is a constant desire not to bother her friends. Just now I offered her a hairdresser and a shoemaker, and she straightway refused them—out of pure delicacy.

Lucrezia. (By all that's holy, he's a rattle-tongue of the first water!)

Lasca. May we take it that Signor Nibio, knowing the high opinion that I hold of this artist, is ready to offer her a good opening?

Nibio. Sir—he would *make* one!

Lucrezia (to Nibio). Believe me, sir, I am one who always speaks from the heart. If you do me a favour I shall not be slow to recognize it.

Lasca. Indeed, from what she tells me, I can assure you that she is sometimes even too liberal.

Lucrezia. Not to every one, sir, not to every one.

Lasca. Quite so—but I, you see, am the same to all. Come now, Signor Nibio, let's hear what you have to say.

Nibio. Yesterday, in all sober truth, I ran into something extraordinary, something stupendous, something that might be called a gold mine—but I don't want any one else to get at it. I confide the matter only to you, sir, and this lady—but keep it dark, for the love of heaven, keep it dark.

Lasca. Oh, I'll not speak.

Lucrezia. I am a woman and I am young, but I promise and vouch for my secrecy.

Lasca. As I told you—she's a charming woman.

Nibio. Then let me apprise you that a certain Turk, a celebrated merchant from Smyrna, has arrived at Venice in one of his ships, for the purpose of selling his goods. Some of his friends have put it into his head—whether at random or with some self-interest I can't say—that it would be a fine thing if he took back a company of musicians to Smyrna—men and women who should give opera there. They have pointed out that in this great mercantile port there are numberless Frenchmen, Spaniards, Italians, and Englishmen, that Smyrna has no places of public recreation, and that a novelty of this kind would do credit to an enterprising man like himself and, moreover, might make the fortune of any one who worked under him—supposing that he did not condescend to appropriate for himself the immense yield that such an undertaking would produce. The Turk, who is a good fellow and not avaricious, and yet at the same time a whimsical creature, has thought it over, and as a result has thrown himself into the enterprise. But he hasn't any knowledge whatever of such business, and his friends have therefore promised to assist him. I myself have taken over the duty of providing the singers and musicians. I honestly believe that the first to get to those parts will carry away their guineas by the bagful; and because I have such deep respect for the Count, I herewith make the initial offer to this lady for whom he has expressed his good feeling and esteem.

Lucrezia. (For me this'd be the best job in the world.)

Lasca. My dear Signor Nibio, I thank you vastly. You can now judge, madam, whether my friendship is worth anything.

Lucrezia. My obligation to you, sir, is endless. (He is certainly most generous—of words!)

Lasca. Be quick about it, Signor Nibio—delays are dan-

gerous. If you are authorized to draw up the contracts, tell us the fee and draw it up at once.

Nibio. Thanks to his friends the Impresario does trust me, it's true, but so that he'll never be able to say that I deceived him, I should like him just to hear her before I make the arrangements. He knows nothing whatever about music, but I want him to be satisfied.

Lasca. Excellent. We'll do that. Just bring him along. Signora Lucrezia will make no difficulty about singing, and the Turk—why, he'll be astounded when he hears her in that adorable song:

‘ Uttering her complaint
The turtle-dove goes by.’

Lucrezia. (So now he's let a gadfly loose!)

Nibio. I'll see if I can find him. If so, I'll bring him here at once.

Lucrezia. If he comes he will be most welcome—but it worries me that the spinet should be out of tune. Count, will you just be so kind as to send me a tuner?

Lasca. Oh, I'm sure Signor Nibio will send one. Those are his affairs. He is experienced—he knows. (*To Nibio.*) You'll send a tuner to the lady?

Lucrezia. (Dirty mean dog!)

Nibio. I'll send one immediately. I'm just going to find the Turk, and I'm going at once because we're dealing with a tricky matter—and one, too, that might be a good stroke of business for *me*. I also am hoping to sail, sir, as business-manager of the company; and what with the salary and the possibilities, I expect, if it turns out well, to come back to Italy so rich that I shall be able to set up in management myself. Any one who has once had a taste of the theatre can't get away from it as long as he lives, and though, as mere cornet of the accounts, I've little enough at present—just you wait, for I shan't stop till I've taken the citadel! (*Exit.*)

SCENE TEN

(COUNT LASCA and LUCREZIA.)

Lasca. Madam, I flatter myself that I have secured you a good engagement.

Lucrezia. I am deeply obliged, sir, but—to be frank—the kindness didn't cost you much trouble.

Lasca. Aha! So you're already beginning to be grateful in your own style! You think I've done little in being the cause that some one who knows what I am should have thought of you. But there! I don't take it in bad part. I am too well acquainted with your sex and your profession. Excuse me if I speak frankly—I am a straightforward man. I want nothing out of you—nothing from your too accommodating generosity. I do good in a general way—pleasing others and amusing myself at the same time. I respect any one who's worthy of being respected. I am a friend to everybody—but particularly of the excellent, upright, and most accommodating Signora Lucrezia.

(Giving her a little smile, he goes out.)

SCENE ELEVEN

(LUCREZIA alone.)

Lucrezia. Plague take you! What a stupid cavalier! The more I tempt him the more he refrains. If I go to Smyrna I shall find people who account generosity a merit. It's true that at present I am not worth much in music, but in other matters I yield the palm to no one. I know how to oblige with a grace, how to unite compliance with honesty—and also how to pluck a quail without making him scream!

(Exit.)

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

A Room in the House of Signora Tognina.

(Present, TOGNINA and PASQUALINO.)

Tognina. Dear Signor Pasqualino, for some time past you have made yourself very scarce. Any one else would say, 'Tognina is my singer; I love her, I will not sing without her; whoever wants *me* as tenor must take *her* as prima donna,' and a hundred other tender amorous things. Two days without coming to see me! Where have you been these two days?

Pasqualino. I've been . . .

Tognina. I don't believe you!

Pasqualino. But let me tell you . . .

Tognina. Not a word! You think I don't know that you gad about here, there, and everywhere—flirting with all the singers in the place. Tell me, have you visited that Florentine girl who arrived here last night?

Pasqualino. No, I have not.

Tognina. But you know she has come?

Pasqualino. Yes.

Tognina. I wager you've paid her a visit.

Pasqualino (smiling). No, really.

Tognina. You smile, though.

Pasqualino. Yes. You evidently suppose that every girl is running after me.

Tognina. Oh! I'm not saying they're all enchanted by you. Don't fancy yourself as the darling of Cytherea! What I do say is, that you run about everywhere—playing the glutton and the love-sick swain.

Pasqualino. But believe me, Tognina . . .

Tognina. Be silent! I know all your evasions.

Pasqualino. You're just tearing me to bits!

Tognina. Look, look—the poor little innocent one! Mustn't

torment it, the wretched little thing! Tell me, you blackguardly monster, how long is it since you were with the Bolognese girl?

Pasqualino (smiling). I?

Tognina. Don't smile, you beast—for, as sure as I live, if you laugh in my face I'll box your ears.

Pasqualino. Zounds! You force me to say it. I've stood enough, and too much. You seem to regard me as a paid servant. If you wish, I can give you respect, consideration, and even love, but the worm itself will turn.

Tognina. Come, come—don't burst your lungs, don't get into a frenzy. I said it because—well, I know why I said it. This is what comes of being nice to such brutes as you.

Pasqualino. (And I know that you can't let such women even touch your hand.)

Tognina (seriously). Come, come, sir . . .

Pasqualino (smiling). What is it?

Tognina. So you still smile?

Pasqualino. I smile because you know how much I like you, and you pretend to doubt it.

Tognina. Stupid!

Pasqualino. Well, there you are!

Tognina. Now, now, not so much temper!

Pasqualino. I can't put up with . . .

Tognina. Be silent, I say. I've something to tell you.

Pasqualino. Go on—I'm listening.

Tognina. You deserve to be treated as you treat me, and after this it'd only be right if I avenged myself for your scant attentions.

Pasqualino. How could I make you suffer? If I . . .

Tognina. Let's say no more about it. Are you working now? Have you a contract with any theatre?

Pasqualino. There you wrong me. The moment I had an engagement you should hear of it.

Tognina. You mean that?

Pasqualino. I'd stake my head on it.

Tognina. Listen! I'm going to tell you a secret. I promised not to speak of it, but I can't keep anything from my Pasqualino. So promise me—swear—that you won't say anything to any one.

Pasqualino. I promise, and you can rely on my word.

Tognina. Count Lasca paid me a visit and told me in confidence, with the utmost secrecy, that he came on behalf of a Turk who is forming a company for Smyrna; that the Turk is rich and will give most advantageous conditions; that I am the first to know of it, and that there's nobody else who does know of it at present.

Pasqualino. At present, to my knowledge, there are two of us that know of it, for the Count has made just the same confidence to me.

Tognina. Count Lasca realizes that we are friends—realizes that I won't sing without you—and, of course, that's why he made the same proposition to you and with the same secrecy.

Pasqualino. Did the Count say what post they'll give you?

Tognina. Oh, there's no question about that! I am the first to know of it. I am mistress of the situation. No one will be able to deprive me of the lead.

Pasqualino. If there are two tenors I shall want to be the first.

Tognina. Dear Pasqualino, you are so young. You have a good falsetto and such excellent top notes! Couldn't you take up the part of the first soprano?

Pasqualino. But why should I?

Tognina. Because, my dear precious, I'm convinced that even when we're acting we make love together—and one sings a tender song with so much more pleasure when one puts meaning into it. Suppose now, there is a song that says:

' Darling, I sigh for thee,'

one really gives it force to the extent that it comes from the heart; and the crowd, recognizing that, is thrilled, and cries out 'Splendid!'

SCENE TWO

(Those present, and MACCARIO and ANNINA.)

Maccario. May we come in?

Pasqualino. Who are these?

Tognina. Don't you know Signor Maccario, the poet?

Pasqualino. And the lady?

Tognina. Are you blind or are you pretending to be? Don't you know Annina from Bologna—who is called the Chestnut? Let them come, let them come. They're welcome. (*To Pasqualino, with annoyance.*) You pretend not to know her so that I shall think you don't visit her.

Pasqualino. Oh! So we've come back to that, have we?

Tognina. Be discreet when people are about, and above all say nothing of the Turk.

Maccario. Accept my service.

Annina. My service to Signora Tognina.

Tognina. My most honoured guest!

Annina. How are you?

Tognina. At your disposal.

Annina. You certainly look bewitching.

Tognina. And how are you?

Annina. Well—I'm thankful to say, quite well, at your service.

Tognina (to Pasqualino). Come, have you nothing to say? You're not very polite.

Pasqualino (to Tognina). We have met already.

Tognina (to Pasqualino). Ah, you villain, I knew you!

Pasqualino (to Tognina). And what do you mean by that?

Tognina (to Pasqualino). What do I mean? Aren't you blushing? Tell me, Signora Annina, is it long since Signor Pasqualino left you?

Annina. Oh, my dearest—a minute or two. And for the matter of that, why do you drag me into these scenes? If Signor Pasqualino belongs to you, let him come or stay away, it's all one to me. I'm not capable of doing anything shady.

Tognina (to Annina). And now you're cross with me . . .

Annina. Oh, come! You've nothing to worry about. I shall be gone from here in no time.

Tognina. On a job?

Annina. Probably—I hope so.

Tognina. Where? May one ask?

Annina. I mustn't say where.

Tognina. What are you afraid of? You can freely confide in me.

Annina. I'll tell you frankly—it's a job that will add to my reputation, but at present I mustn't speak about it.

Tognina. And what is the obstacle?

Maccario. Madam, I'll explain. The matter which is before us has not been concluded, and, until we see the end of it, Signora Annina is positively bound not to speak.

Tognina. And so you are her mouthpiece?

Maccario. I am nobody's mouthpiece, but it is in my own interest that nothing should be said of this; for I, also, expect to be employed in the business, and if anybody else came to know of it, he might displace me.

Pasqualino. They're going to write a new libretto?

Maccario. New or adapted.

Pasqualino. Adapted or ruined.

Maccario. Sir, you amaze me! You doubt my talent!

Tognina. Come, that's enough. Signora Annina, I'm genuinely sorry for you.

Annina. And why?

Tognina. What do you really think of me? I am not false, and never have been. If you will confide in me, I promise and swear that I'll confide to you a secret that is probably much more interesting than yours.

Annina. Really? Of course, I don't want to seem to distrust you. Shall I tell it or not, Signor Maccario?

Maccario. For my part I maintain that you had best keep silence.

Tognina. Oh, as for you, Signor Maccario, you go about looking for evil—like the Medici.

Annina. All right, come here! I'll satisfy you. (I'm curious, too, to know what's up *her* sleeve.) But I beg you for secrecy.

Tognina. What more d'you want? I have given my word.

Annina. D'you know, Signora Tognina, a Turk has come to Venice, and means to assemble a company . . .

Tognina. So you've heard it too!

Annina. What! Do you know of it?

Tognina. Do I know of it! But tell me, of whom did you learn the news?

Annina. Oh! I can't tell that. And who told you?

Tognina. Me? Count Lasca.

Annina. All's square, then; for this same Count Lasca told *me*—in confidence, with great secrecy.

Pasqualino. And that's just what he did with me.

Annina. A fine turn he's done us!

Tognina. What a patron!

Maccario. Good people, I don't feel that you have any ground for railing at him on that score. If Count Lasca has made this confidence to both of you it may be of use to one and the other at the same time. In a play one needs a first lady and a second lady, and both of you therefore may find employment.

Pasqualino. Signor Maccario is talking sense. The whole thing may be quite innocent.

Tognina. Very well—if it is, I've no more to say. With me for the first and you for the second we shall both be well pleased.

Annina. Oh! excuse me, I shall have to be the first.

Tognina. And why, madam? Of course, I respect your talent; but professionally I have the advantage of you both in experience and reputation. I have been first lady for three years. And a beginner can't come along and displace me.

Annina. Beginner! With whom do you think you're speaking? It's true that I'm younger than you, and I'm proud of it, but a singer who can improvise cannot be called a

beginner. I have played second till now for the sake of practice—to learn stage business; but henceforth, I'll be nothing less than first.

Pasqualino. Just see how these points of precedence and these pretensions always play the devil with a company! My dearest ladies, you are hoping to have work and to make money; you are not yet certain of going to Smyrna, and yet each of you is already claiming the position of leading lady.

Tognina. Signor Pasqualino has certainly a great opinion of me. Does he advise me to bemean myself just for the sake of some wretched fee?

Pasqualino. I was addressing both of you, and with an equal sincerity and respect. But when the time comes, Signora Annina, who boasts—quite truly—of being the younger, will act fairly, I don't doubt, and give up the first place.

Annina. I shall yield to no one.

Tognina. Much less will I.

Maccario. Then pray let me solve this problem. Most poets who write dramas for music are either ignorant or will not put themselves to a little trouble. I am not like that. I realize, for instance, that there can be two equal parts and that both ladies may be perfectly satisfied. When we go to Smyrna I will write a libretto on purpose, in which the two ladies shall have the same number of songs, verses, and even gestures. And lest there should be any difficulty about being the first to come on, I will see to it that both shall enter at the same moment.

SCENE THREE

(Those present and CARLUCCIO.)

Carluccio. Ladies and gentlemen, your servant! I salute the admirable Little Pumpkin—the most beautiful Madame Chestnut.

Annina. Annina's my name.

Tognina. And mine is Tognina.

Carluccio. Why, but all of us are given nicknames. Take me, for instance, I know they call me the 'Bit of Bran'—as if I were the chaff threshed out by the miller! But I'll teach the world that I am flour of the choicest and purest wheat. However, let's talk of another matter. Dear ladies—my good friend Pasqualino—have you any work? Are you employed? Have you been summoned anywhere, commissioned and contracted? Or are you here idle, useless, without hopes?

Tognina. Thank heaven, I'm not long out of an engagement.

Annina. If I want concerts, there's no lack of them.

Pasqualino. And I'm sure I shan't be here long—I am so well known.

Carluccio. Mere chatter, froth, empty hopes! And you, Signor Maccario, are you busy? How are you employing your time and your marvellous, your stupendous talent?

Maccario. You shouldn't joke about that. My talent is well recognized, and I have plenty of opportunity of practising it.

Carluccio. Really, my dear children, I'm sorry for all of you. I wager that none of you has work actually in hand.

Tognina. I've a project which will turn somebody green if it comes off.

Carluccio. If it comes off! You make me laugh. If it comes off!

Annina. Signora Tognina says *if* it comes off, but I say *when* it comes off.

Carluccio. You're certain of it? Is it signed? A good post, good pay, good conditions?

Annina. First-rate conditions. And they will be signed in no time.

Carluccio (*laughing*). Will be, will be. Ha, ha, ha!

Pasqualino. Yes, sir, things are so well under way that one may consider the matter accomplished.

Carluccio. But how often things almost accomplished dissolve into air! You poor creatures! You have nothing certain; and as for your hopes, they're either badly founded or they

won't amount to much. Come here! I'm your very good friend. I myself, I say, will employ you, will do you a good turn. A good turn indeed! It's a fortune! A certain, stable, and extraordinary fortune! What do you say? With your projects and your hopes, are you in a position to accept the offer of a real friend, a good fellow, a promiser like myself?

Tognina. Let's hear if it's acceptable.

Carluccio. Acceptable! What? Don't you know me? Do you suppose that I come along proposing an engagement at a hundred, two hundred, three hundred florins! Guineas by the thousand, as I am speaking to you! When I mean to do a kindness I do it properly. Poor wretches, if it weren't for me you'd be throwing yourselves away.

Pasqualino. But the engagement which we have in view . . .

Carluccio. Trumpery!

Annina. If it comes off, as I hope, as I'm sure . . .

Carluccio. Trumpery, I tell you, trumpery.

Maccario. Well, let's hear this offer of Signor Carluccio.

Carluccio. Indeed, my poor Maccario, it'll mean bread for you also.

Tognina. Come on, then, tell us.

Pasqualino. My dear fellow, out with it.

Annina. We're listening. Don't keep us in suspense.

Carluccio. Then you must know, good friends, that a Turk . . . *(they all burst out laughing).* What? laughing? Yes, good people, a Turk . . .

Tognina. From Smyrna . . .

Annina. A rich merchant . . .

Pasqualino. Is gathering a company . . .

Maccario. And wants a new play . . .

Carluccio (in astonishment). Ah! then you know it also?

Pasqualino. So this is the great project, the great benefit, that Signor Carluccio intends to offer these miserable wretches!

Carluccio. But how the devil did you get wind of this Turk?

Annina. Count Lasca . . .

Tognina. Count Lasca .

SCENE FOUR

(Those present and COUNT LASCA.)

Lasca. Here I am. Who's calling me?*Carluccio.* Sir, I'm surprised at you! You come along bringing me a confidence—you come along proposing an engagement in all secrecy—and everybody knows about it.*Lasca.* For the matter of that, if I make you a confidence why do you go about propagating the secret?*Carluccio.* A fine secret! There are five of us here, and all five know of it.*Lasca.* I might say I'd done it to amuse myself; and if I had, I should do no wrong to your prudence; but I assure you, that in admitting you all to the secret, I had meant to do a kindness to every one. There are positions for all of you, and when I told you not to tell any one, I meant that you weren't to publish it to others; but since you've spoken of it among your five selves, you have probably done so with ten others or even a hundred, and so I wash my hands of it.*Tognina.* Oh, Count! No, no!*Annina.* Don't go away angry.*Maccario.* Don't desert us.*Pasqualino.* As for me, I assure you, I didn't tell any one.*Lasca.* Listen, I'm a good-natured man. I'm sorry for you, and I'm willing to overlook your frailty. I should be grieved if this chance were lost—particularly for poor Carluccio. . . .*Carluccio.* I'm not saying I wouldn't have gladly gone to Smyrna just to see a new country and the turbans and the great mustachios, but I must say also that if you want a first-rate soprano I don't know where you'd find another.*Lasca.* I suppose it isn't possible for you to moderate your conceit?*Carluccio.* Humility is a good and lovely thing, but sometimes we are bound to do justice to ourselves.*Lasca.* And by doing it to yourselves you prevent others from doing it.

Annina. Don't let us get lost in these vain discussions, for when Signor Carluccio once begins he can never stop.

Tognina. Yes, let's talk of what really matters. Does the Turk mean to call on me?

Lasca. If I ask him, I hope he won't say 'No.'

Annina. And will he call on me?

Lasca. If Signora Tognina consents, you can await him here.

Annina. Oh no! really, sir, I have nothing to do with her.

If the Turk wants to hear my voice he must pay me a visit. I'm thankful to say I have a very decent house which a prince might visit; I've an excellent spinet, and then, too, mamma is there, and my brother. No, I've no intention of being heard away from home.

Tognina. (What stuck-up airs! I can't stand her.)

Annina. So you see, Count.

Lasca. I see.

Annina. And what do you say?

Lasca. I say—do just as you wish, for it's little or nothing to me.

Annina. A pretty answer, I must say!

Carluccio. Quite right, Signora. *You* keep up your position—and that's the way to do it. If the Turk wants to hear *me* he must pay me a visit too.

Lasca (*smiling*). And you, Signor Pasqualino?

Pasqualino. I am not inferior to the rest.

Lasca. And you, Signor Maccario?

Maccario. Oh, I'm not so particular as that. I'll visit him three, four, six times, and as often, indeed, as you may wish or command. I put myself in your hands.

Lasca. My dear poet, your modesty delights me, and it will be a pleasure to bestir myself on your behalf.

SCENE FIVE

(Those present and NIBIO.)

Nibio. Most worthy people.

Tognina. Come in, Signor Nibio.

Annina. Signor Nibio, my greetings!

Nibio. I am servant to all of you.

Carluccio. And how is the excellent agent for destitute musicians?

Nibio. Very well. I am ready for every one—for Signor Carluccio himself when he requires me.

Carluccio. Indeed, you are the great man who had the honour of first presenting me upon the stage, and I fancy I've made your reputation.

Nibio. I should have made yours if you had conducted yourself with a little more discretion.

Carluccio. My dear Nibio, you're crazy. But I wish you no harm, and if I go to Smyrna I'll take you with me.

Nibio (astonished). To Smyrna?

Lasca. You see, my dear Nibio, how well the secret has been kept.

Nibio. Who's the idiot that let it out?

Tognina. The Count himself.

Lasca (hotly to Tognina). What impertinence!

Tognina. Pardon me, I didn't mean that you . . .

Nibio. Well, well, what's done is done, and we must try to put it straight—though the matter has now become so generally known that I doubt if we shall try to much purpose. I'll do everything I can; but I'm not authorized to draw up the contracts. The Turk has given me power to offer engagements, but has kept for himself the right of ratifying them.

Tognina. The Impresario must pay me a call.

Annina. And me.

Carluccio. He must call on me first.

Pasqualino. Or on me.

Nibio. Good people, the Turk told me clearly that—precisely in order not to give any offence—he doesn't mean to visit a soul. Those who call upon him will be welcome; those who don't can remain where they are. And to those who intend to go I can do no more than show them the way there.

Tognina. But, Count, what did you tell me?

Lasca. I thought I could make him come here, but I see that the Turk is right, and I advise you to call on him.

Tognina. But this is terrible! A lady of my position to call on an Impresario! I've never done it and never will.

Lasca. And what about you, Signora Annina?

Annina. I . . . I don't know. . . . But if I do go, I shall go with mamma and my brother.

Tognina. (She means to push me out.) Very good, Count, since we are dealing with a Turk who is not acquainted with our customs, perhaps after all I *will* go. Would you be so kind as to escort me?

Lasca. Excuse me. I would gladly oblige you but I have pressing business. Go, and I'll join you. Perhaps we shall all meet at the Turk's. (I don't intend to be seen in town with an opera-singer.) (Exit.)

Tognina. (I'd wager he's gone so as not to pay for my gondola!) Pasqualino, will you be so kind as to go with me?

Pasqualino. I should be delighted.

Annina. (She mustn't get there before I do.) Signor Nibio, will you be so kind as to accompany me?

Nibio. When do you mean to go?

Annina. At once, if you will.

Nibio. Let us go, then. I am yours.

Tognina. How's this, Signora Annina? Do you mean to be heard by the Turk without your mamma and your brother?

Annina. Bother you! You're always trying to annoy me. I won't answer you back in your own room, but if we sing together I'll see that *you* eat the garlic.

Carluccio. You all make me laugh—clinging together as if for dear life. I stand on my dignity. I'm not going to seek out any one. Whoever wants me must come to me. (I've a pair of good legs and I guess I shall get there first of them all.) (Exit.)

Tognina. Some of their talk is disgraceful! What do you say of Annina's presumption? She treats me as if I were a hack singer. Doesn't she know that I've sung at Rimini,

at Sinigaglia, at Chiozza, at the fair at Rovigo? Poor fool! She's not worthy to play the smallest part with me. The very first evening I'll cause her to die of despair. When they hear me at Smyrna I shall make my fortune—and the Impresario's too. Write me up a good part, Signor Maccario, and don't you worry. I'm a grateful woman; and in the measure of the opportunities you give me, I offer you the freedom of my rooms, my table, and perhaps just something else.

(Goes out with Pasqualino.)

Maccario. Well, that's all very nice! To a poor author like me even the just-something-else of these singers doesn't exactly turn the stomach! *(Exit.)*

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

A Room in Ali's Hotel. A large sofa in the middle, a number of chairs.

(ALI smoking a long pipe. To him, one of the Hotel Servants.
ALI sits down on the sofa and smokes.)

Servant. Please, sir, somebody wants to see you.

Ali. He is gentleman or he is dog?

Servant. In appearance he seems to be a person of some standing.

Ali. Let him come. (*Exit Servant.*)

SCENE TWO

(*Enter CARLUCCIO.* ALI, continuing to smoke, rises from the divan as CARLUCCIO enters.)

Carluccio. Your servant. They told me about you, sir, and I have come to see you for the pleasure of making your acquaintance.

Ali. You are man or you are woman?

Carluccio (with some heat). Good sir, I am a man. (*Ali seats himself again upon the divan with some contempt.*) (If he sits, I shall sit too.) (*Offers to sit on the same divan.*)

Ali (preventing him). Who tell you to sit?

Carluccio. Must I stand, then? (It's a good thing nobody's about.) I see, sir, that you do not know me. I am a musician, a singer, and I can boast myself to be one of the most famous, if not indeed the very most famous, of our time; and I come to offer myself for your enterprise, not out of necessity and not in my own interest, but just from curiosity to see Smyrna.

Ali. Smyrna have no need of your person. If you wish to go to Turkey, I send you Constantinople—Great Lord's Seraglio.

Carluccio. What shall I do in the Seraglio?

Ali. To look after the women of the great Sultan.

Carluccio. What do you think I am?

Ali. You are not an eunuch?

Carluccio. You astound me. I—of that vile race! I tell you I am a musical artist.

Ali (with amazement). A musician, you?

Carluccio (imitating him). A musician, I.

Ali. Who can think that Italy will have a man like you to sing for a woman! For a woman, Turkey has a woman.

Carluccio. I am a soprano. My voice may be silvery, but I sing and declaim men's parts.

Ali. You have no voice of man. I am not so filthy to want a musician who sing like a cat.

Carluccio. But singers like me are prized and honoured everywhere. We are very rare the world over. Ask Nibio. He's agent for your enterprise, and he'll tell you that I'm a capable and first-rate artist. I've done all the principal theatres, and wherever I've sung the managers have had immense receipts. A single passage from me, a trill, a cadenza, or merely a simple roulade, is enough to hold an audience. There has never been such a voice as mine—so clear, so strong, so resonant, so well controlled, so faultless. I have twenty-seven notes, and each one as good as the rest. I know every trick of the trade. I can play comedy. I can sing the demon's part, dressed in the height of taste. I can instruct and direct the unskilful and, if necessary, can act as poet and conductor.

Ali. And all your noise—to me it is nothing!

SCENE THREE

(Those present and the SERVANT.)

Servant. Sir, there's a lady coming upstairs.

Ali. A musician?

Servant. I fancy so.

Ali (smiling and touching his face to show that he wants to know if she is pretty). How is she?

Servant. Not so bad.

Ali. She is alone?

Servant. I believe I saw a certain Nibio with her.

Ali (smiling). Ah! yes, yes, Nibio—he is clever!

Carluccio. Sir, if you will . . .

Servant. Here she comes.

(*Exit.*)

Carluccio. Sir, if you will . . .

Ali (rising and looking off stage). She is young, she is pretty.

Carluccio. Sir, sir, will you hear me?

Ali. To the devil—go!

SCENE FOUR

(Those present, and NIBIO and ANNINA.)

Annina (curtseying to *Ali*). Your devoted servant.

Nibio. Signor *Ali*, you see before you a fine artist.

Ali (graciously to *Annina*). Artist?

Annina. If you please, sir—yes.

Ali (sitting on the divan). You sit next to me.

Annina (doing so). By your gracious command, sir.

Carluccio. She sit and I stand? It's an insult! I won't put up with it. (He takes a chair and sits down pompously.)

Ali (to *Annina*). Say your name.

Annina. *Annina*, at your service.

Ali. Your country.

Annina. Bologna.

Ali (to *Nibio*). Like much your nice Bolognese.

Annina. You are too kind.

Ali. Are you clever as pretty?

Annina. It's not for me to say, but Signor *Nibio* knows me. He can tell you if I have talent.

Nibio. She's a clever girl, I promise you.

Ali. If clever, if pretty, you make every one love . . .

Carluccio. Yes, Signora *Annina* has talent, and if *I* say so . . .

Ali (contemptuously). Who say you to speak?

Carluccio. (I've a great mind to pull his moustache.)

Ali (to Annina). How much your manner please me!

Annina. It is the result of your own courtesy.

Ali. What you wish for pay?

Annina. (If he really likes me, I'll make him pay well.) I am a modest girl, but if I am contracted to go to a distant country and, what is worse, by sea, I would not go for less than five hundred guineas.

Carluccio. Oh! oh! Five hundred guineas? And you think you've asked too much! I shan't go for a thousand.

Ali (to Carluccio). To a creature like you, I not give thirty pence. (To *Annina.*) Pretty Bolognese—all you want!

Carluccio (softly to Nibio). I put myself in your hands. This ignorant Turk can't recognize talent. Tell him who I am. Arrange that he shall take me—at a good figure—and I promise you twelve per cent.

Nibio (to Ali). Sir, if you mean to form a company, after the Italian style, which will please the Europeans who are in Smyrna, you really must take a soprano, and, in all sincerity, a better soprano than this gentleman would be difficult to find.

Ali. If I must have a man-singer, find me—find a soprano who do not sing like a woman.

Nibio. Oh, excuse me, the musicians who sing with masculine voices are called tenors, and it's they who do the parts of fathers, kings, and tyrants. But for the lead you must have a soprano who will play the first lover and who can sing really well—especially the pathetic songs.

Ali. I no wish pathetic.

Nibio. But it is necessary.

Ali. I like gay music.

Nibio. A soprano is indispensable.

Ali. Curse the soprano and curse you also.

Nibio. Am I to keep him or not?

Ali (contemptuously). Yes, keep your devil, your misbegotten creature. (To *Annina.*) Excuse me, pretty singer. (To *Nibio.*) Tenor, soprano—you not drive me mad with them any more.

Annina. I beg you, don't be angry, don't overheat yourself.

I fear for your health.

Ali. You are charming, charming—little Bolognese.

Nibio (to Carluccio). Then we can go ahead.

Ali. Go away.

Nibio (to Ali). I don't want you to spend a thousand guineas, but it must be eight hundred.

Ali (to Nibio). Go away.

Carluccio (to Nibio). Eight hundred is not enough. (*To Ali.*)

I shall want a thousand guineas and my lodging paid.

Ali (impatiently). Go away!

Nibio. Well, then, I'll arrange the difference—a hundred more, a hundred less. . . .

Ali. Go away—scoundrel!

Nibio. I will come back at a more convenient time. (*Exit.*)

Carluccio. And I want comfortable quarters, a carriage, a little dressing-room, a libretto that suits me, and . . .

Ali (threatening to throw his pipe at Carluccio's face). If you want more, if you more annoy me, I break my pipe.

Carluccio. Good sir, I humbly take my leave. (*Exit.*)

SCENE FIVE

(ALI and ANNINA.)

Ali (sitting down). I have done much business in my life, but I no understand—I never understand—this business of the theatre. If all musicians are like that one who has gone out, I no be able to keep this head on these shoulders. But if man is insolent, woman is very good. I have much pleasure of my dear Annina.

Annina. You overwhelm me. But pray, sir—if I may ask you—suppose that I have the honour of coming with you, shall I be leading lady?

Ali. Leading lady? Why, in my heart, you are the first, if you will be.

Annina. But shall I have the first part?

Ali. The first part, what is it?

Annina. If there are two ladies in an opera, there must be a first and a second, and I'm asking if I shall be the first.

Ali. The first is better than the second?

Annina. Of course.

Ali. Be whatever you wish.

Annina. I am so much obliged to you. (I did well to come first. I've secured the job and I'm safe for the first place.)

Ali. My dear, my pretty one, who is so very clever, give me your little white hand.

Annina (*drawing back her hand*). Oh, sir! You must please excuse me that.

Ali. Why you not give me your little hand? Every one has tell me that artists are clever.

Annina. Listen, sir. There are some ladies who, when an opera is being arranged, are very ingratiating, and behave freely with the Impresario in order to make him give them—say—a better salary or a pretty frock, and afterwards, when the work is under way, they abandon him and attach themselves to one of the musicians or dancers. I have always been virtuous; I have always treated the Impresario demurely, and I shall always be your true friend—on this side of virtue and modesty.

Ali. I am Turk and not understand well your words.

Annina. I mean . . .

Ali. Give little hand and say what you will.

SCENE SIX

(Those present and the SERVANT.)

Servant. Sir . . .

Ali. What you want?

Servant. A musician, a tenor . . .

Ali. Send away.

Servant. There's a lady with him.

Ali. Lady . . . lady . . . she come.

Servant. (When he's angry a woman can change him quickly enough.) (Exit.)

Annina. (I bet it's Tognina.)

Ali. Your hand you not give?

Annina. There, then—I don't want you to be annoyed with me. (*She puts out her hand, but Ali, seeing Tognina, does not take it.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(*Enter TOGNINA and PASQUALINO.*)

Ali (*looking at Tognina*). (She is a ten pound note!)

Tognina (*to Pasqualino*). (There she is; I told you so; she's come before us.) (*To Ali.*) Your servant, sir.

Ali. You are who?

Tognina. Tognina, the singer, by your leave.

Pasqualino. And I, sir . . .

Ali. You I not ask. Signora Tognina—to sit here with me. (*He makes room for Tognina on the divan. She sits on his right. Ali remains between the two women.*)

Tognina. I thank you for your courtesy.

Annina. (He took Tognina's hand. But if we sing together I'll be avenged.)

Tognina. Signor Pasqualino, by leave of this gentleman, take a chair and sit down.

Ali (*to Pasqualino*). What you wish here?

Pasqualino. I came with her . . .

Ali (*to Tognina*). What he do with you?

Tognina. I let him accompany me, so that I might not come here alone. He is an excellent tenor who sings to perfection, and is an honour to music.

Ali. He has a face not bad. If he can sing well, why the tenor cannot do for the soprano?

Tognina. And who said that he couldn't?

Ali. It was Nibio who try to force me take that accursed soprano.

Tognina. Nibio doesn't know what he's talking about. I declare—I give you my word for it—a tenor of this kind is better than all the sopranos in the world.

Ali. (Nibio, a rogue, a rascal. He try to cheat me in his own interest.)

Annina. (The lady friend means to advance her favourite.)

Ali (to *Pasqualino*). Say how much you want.

Pasqualino. Sir, I am not exacting. I will come, if you agree, at four hundred guineas.

Ali. (The musician wants a thousand, the tenor four hundred. I send the soprano to the devil.) (To *Tognina*.) And you, how much you ask me?

Tognina. Whatever you will give me. I know that your Excellency is a great gentleman. Your handsome face delights me; and on your behalf I would sing, as they say, for nothing.

Ali. *Tognina* is generous. Your speech much delights, and of *Ali* you shall not regret.

Annina. If I asked for a sum, sir, I did so in obedience to you; but you may do what you will with me also.

Ali. The Bolognese is a little rogue! She know now that *Tognina* has done better not to ask.

Tognina (taking his hand). You see, I spoke from the heart. It is the first time I have the honour of seeing you, but I do feel that we are in sympathy.

Annina (taking his other hand). And the very moment I saw you I was overjoyed.

Ali. Little rogue! Both you are charming. Both you are beautiful. I promise to both that I have you for my singers.

Tognina. I shall not object to having Signora *Annina* in my caste, but let us be quite clear—I shall be first and she second.

Annina. My dear lady, you've come a little late. Signor *Ali* has promised me the first part.

Tognina. You promised it to her?

Ali. What I promise I not know.

Annina. Don't you remember, or are you pretending not to remember, that I am to be the leading lady?

Ali (rising, to *Tognina*). To be first, to be second, is it not the same?

Tognina. Oh no, sir. Either the lead or nothing.

Pasqualino. (Damned etiquette! If she loses the job I shall lose it too.)

Ali. If I pay the same, what matter your pretension?

Annina (*rising*). The money is nothing to me. I think of my honour.

Ali. Honour. (*To Pasqualino.*) Speak you. The second's part is a villain's part?

Pasqualino. No, sir, sometimes the second part is better than the first.

Ali (*to the women*). Then to be first is no matter.

Annina. First or nothing.

Tognina. First, or I take my leave.

Ali (*to Tognina*). Come, if you really want to please me . . .

Tognina. But my reputation . . .

Ali (*to Annina*). If you respect me . . .

Annina. But I am who I am.

Tognina. Never—not for two thousand guineas.

Annina. Not if you made me a queen.

Tognina. I vow I'll never do it.

Ali. No? No? And I send you both to the devil!

SCENE EIGHT

(Those present and the SERVANT.)

Servant. Another visitor.

Ali. I suffocate!

Servant. Another lady.

Ali. I want no more ladies.

Servant. I'll tell her to go, then.

Ali. Stop! Listen! Who is it?

Servant. Another singing lady, I fancy.

Ali. I have enough of music. I not endure more ladies . . .
Stay . . . She is pretty?

Servant. Most charming.

Ali. Ah! . . . Let her . . . She come in.

(*Exit Servant.*)

Pasqualino (to Tognina). (Be careful. If there's another rival the job may not rest with you.)

Tognina. (Leave it to me. I know my value, and I'm not afraid.)

SCENE NINE

(Those present and LUCREZIA.)

Lucrezia. Signor Ali, your most humble servant. Forgive my boldness. Count Lasca told me that you are a gentleman of such breeding that I took courage to come and see you; and Signor Nibio told me, too, that they had spoken about me and that you intended to favour me with a visit. I could never have allowed you to take so much trouble, and so I've come myself to see you, to make your acquaintance and also to thank you for the honour which you mean to pay to our music by planning to transport it across the sea. I love my profession, and I respect and revere those people who are both able and desirous to increase its renown.

Tognina (to Pasqualino). (She talks like a book.)

Annina. (What an accomplished lady!)

Pasqualino (to Tognina). (See how attentively the Turk is looking at her.)

Ali. (Lovely face, lovely speech.) Kindly sit down. (*He indicates the divan.*)

Lucrezia (sitting in the middle of it). Since you command me.

Tognina (sitting close to Lucrezia on right, just where Ali wants to sit). I'll sit down too.

(*Ali goes to the other side, offers to sit, but Annina takes his place.*)

Annina (sitting down). I have no intention of standing.

Ali. Ladies . . . ladies . . . must respect ladies.

Pasqualino. Sir, take my seat.

Ali. No, no—in Turkey we use sofa or cushions. I stand up.

I gladly endure the charming insolence of beauty.

Lucrezia. If the host is standing, people ought not to be

seated while they address him. These persons—whom I have not the honour of knowing—are obviously great ladies or citizens of high rank, and therefore, in order to behave as becomes me, I will be the first to rise. (I fancy they are the same kind of great ladies that I am, but I know all about Turks, and I intend to win by good manners.)

Tognina. (She makes me sick with her affectations.)

Annina. (Let her say what she will. I am well enough where I am.)

Ali (to Lucrezia). Your name.

Lucrezia. Lucrezia, in all obedience.

Ali. You are musician?

Lucrezia. Yes, sir, at your service.

Ali. Of the same profession are all these people.

Lucrezia. Ladies, your very humble servant. (*To Pasqualino.*)

Sir, I salute you. What? Does everybody scorn me? And yet you are right. From persons of rank, I do not deserve better treatment, I who am without merit, unknown and poor in virtue.

Ali. (This one not seem to be plagued of the wish to be leading lady.)

Lucrezia. I suppose, sir, that by this time your nimble wit must have chosen the artists who are most worthy to take part in your enterprise. I who, in the matter of music, belong to the lower class, can hardly merit acceptance. It is true that Nature has given me a voice which has no equal, and that my height and presence give me an advantage on the stage. It is true, also, that most conductors and connoisseurs have decided in favour of my way of singing, that I understand counterpoint and can improvise, and that wherever I have performed—I will put it modestly—people have always been most kind; but I cannot compare myself with persons of such great talent, and for me it would be a fortune if I were allowed to sing with them in order to learn something about my art.

Tognina (to Annina). (Listen, she's poking fun at us.)

Annina. (And what of that? We mustn't let her see that we know it.)

Pasqualino. (Really, for astuteness, the Florentines beat every one.)

Ali. (Her modesty delights me.) To Smyrna you will go?

Lucrezia. Why not? If I am worthy, I will go gladly.

Ali. How much pay you want?

Lucrezia. Let us speak of that later. Tell me first, please, what rank I should have.

Ali. As musician you go?

Lucrezia. As musician—I understand; but, begging your pardon, if you have booked some other singer before me, I should like to know what part would fall to my lot.

Ali. You deserve the first, but I not find ladies who will be the second. You speak me with such modesty, and I hope the second part can be yours.

Lucrezia. Dear Signor Ali, you honour me too much, and I am delighted that you have formed so good an opinion of me. I have no pretensions and I am not governed by vanity. To me any part is good, and I value them all equally. I'm only sorry for my teacher. What of his reputation if he learns that I am not to be the leading lady? What would my countrymen say? What would my relations, my friends, and my patrons say? Were I to comply I should offend them all, upset them and make them furious. My very profession, which must keep up its good name, would lament for me. These ladies and this gentleman who are listening and smiling among themselves—what would they say of me if I so far lowered myself? I thank you for your offer, but—I will say it plainly—if I am to have the honour of serving you, I must be leading lady or nothing. (*She makes a deep curtsy and goes out.*)

Tognina. You understood her lecture? No doubt, you admired her modesty. Ah! dear Impresario, we are all of the same breed. You have heard what I feel about it, and I shall hope for the honour of seeing you again.

Pasqualino. Signor Ali, my respects. If you need me . . .

Ali. Get out! Leave me, curse you! Don't plague me!
(*Exit Pasqualino.*)

Annina. (The idiot! He stands there stock still like a statue.
I daren't speak to him.) Tra-la la-la! . . .

Ali (*angrily*). Faugh!

Annina. (Good heavens! I shan't say a word. I'm off.)

SCENE TEN

(*ALI* walks to and fro furiously without speaking. *Enter*
NIBIO and *MACCARIO*.)

Nibio. Sir, I've just come . . .

Ali. To the devil, curse you!

Nibio. What's wrong with me?

Ali. You have put in my head to make opera at Smyrna.
You write, you engage theatre, friends in Smyrna expect
opera. *Ali* good gentleman, clever, wants to do it, wants
to spend, wants to do all very well, and he no find one
lady who will be second.

Nibio. Is that all? Don't worry. Don't get upset. Nothing
is so plentiful in the world as theatrical ladies, and we'll
find some for the second, third, and even the smallest part.

Maccario. Be so kind, sir, as to take the advice of a man like
me. If you are having difficulty with the ladies, let us
write a libretto with only one lady in it.

Ali. Who are you?

Maccario. A poet, sir.

Ali (*to Nibio*). The poet—what he want?

Nibio. To serve you. I have provided a poet because we
must have one in this enterprise. He will write new plays
in the taste of the country or he will adapt old plays—
whichever may be required. If the producer wants to put
an old song into a new opera, Signor Maccario has talent
enough to fit the words to the music in such a way that
nobody will see through it.

Maccario. Tell him, too, that I instruct singers in action,
direct the scene, run to the boxes to look after the ladies,

attend to the stage effects, and whistle when the scenery is to be changed.

Ali. What is all this muddle? I not understand anything.

SCENE ELEVEN

(Those present, then FABRIZIO; and afterwards all the people who are mentioned by NIBIO.)

Fabrizio (to Ali). My lord.

Ali. And this, now—who is he?

Nibio. This, sir, is an excellent scene-painter who will design the effects and will take with him all his pupils and all his workmen. (*Speaking off stage.*) Gentlemen, gentlemen, come here!

Ali. But how many?

Nibio. Here are the painters, and here are the stage hands. This is the chief man for the lights. Here is the first super with thirty-two colleagues, good fellows and experienced in the theatre. There are the three doorkeepers. There are the two pages who will hold up the ladies' trains. Here is a splendid prompter, able to prompt both the words and the music. Here are two men who will give out the tickets. Here are the men who attend at the boxes to supply and recover the keys. This fellow plays the bear and this one the lion, and this one here, strong and robust as you see, is employed to lead the applause.

Ali. This rabble must all go to Smyrna?

Nibio. Every one of them is necessary.

Ali. They eat up the affair, they eat up the Impresario! Accursed dog—you want to ruin Ali! But if not succeed—as man of honour, I impale you! (*Exit.*)

Nibio. That finishes it.

Maccario. Don't you bother. I'll write a play that shall enchant every one. And supposing that you were really to meet the objectionable end that Signor Ali has prophesied, you will at least die gloriously, and I will write your epitaph in verse. (*Exit.*)

Nibio. I don't mind his absurdities. What worries me is the danger I'm running, but that's not going to stop me trying my fortune. This is the line I'll take. I'll do what I can. I'll act as the others act; and if we fail I'll do what so many have done—manage to hold on to the cash-box, and then, with the first favourable wind, set sail again for Italy.

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

Night. Lucrezia's Room with lights.

(Present, LUCREZIA and COUNT LASCA.)

Lasca. I'm sorry that you didn't find me at the Turk's, but I knew just what would happen. I know the absurd pretensions of these other two ladies, and I admit you were right to maintain your point.

Lucrezia. And I know that at this very minute you're mocking me.

Lasca. How so?

Lucrezia. Because you now say I was right. But when you are with the others you will say just the same to them.

Lasca. You don't know me. You misjudge me. I protest that my first and greatest care is for you.

Lucrezia. Let us put compliments aside and come to business. Shall I be leading lady?

Lasca. Yes, I promise you.

Lucrezia. On what grounds do you promise?

Lasca. After you left the Turk I went to see him. I found him in a terrible state. Nibio had stupidly put him in a rage by gathering round him a whole gang of loafers. I set to work to calm him. I exerted myself on his behalf, and in his lamentable condition he seemed to think that I had dropped out of heaven. He trusts in me, puts himself in my hands, and, giving way to my urgency and my advice, has promised that he will come here to see you this evening.

Lucrezia (pleased). The Turk is coming to see me?

Lasca. He gave me his word and I am expecting him.

Lucrezia. Then at least I shall have the pleasure of speaking to him alone—without the uncomfortable presence of those two upstarts.

Lasca. But I ought to tell you that Signora Annina and Signora Tognina will also be coming here.

Lucrezia. What? They're coming to my house?

Lasca. No, dear Signora Lucrezia, don't say to your house. We are at an inn. Every one can come here freely. If you don't want them to come to your room, Beltrame can give us another, and then you . . .

Lucrezia. No, no, let them come if they must. It's enough that you're here; and, besides, they won't dare be spiteful to me in my own room.

Lasca. I assure you they shall behave themselves properly. They know me, and they're aware that these pleasantries are out of place where I am. I've already spoken to them, and when they arrive you'll see that they'll treat you with all the civility possible.

Lucrezia. I know how to respond with equal politeness to any one who behaves well; in fact, if they're coming to my room, I think I shall have to give them a little something.

Lasca. Oh! that doesn't matter.

Lucrezia. I don't mean anything much, but a little coffee or a little chocolate—as we do in my country.

Lasca. Believe me, that's quite unnecessary.

Lucrezia. Never mind, I'll just get it ready.

Lasca. If there must be anything like that, it ought to come from me.

Lucrezia. Do it if you want to; I won't stand in your way.

Lasca. I'll do it if it seems to be required, but they're not coming here for a chat with you; they're coming on business, and it would be an affectation. . . . Ah! here's Signora Tognina. Show a good face to her. That's worth more than all the refreshment in the world.

SCENE TWO

(Those present and TOGNINA.)

Tognina. Madam, my respects.

Lucrezia. Your devoted servant.

Tognina. How are you?

Lucrezia. At your disposal.

Lasca. Excellent, my dear ladies. I am delighted to see you good friends and good colleagues.

Tognina (ironically). I should be most lucky if I had the honour of being in the same company with a lady so excellent, so good-hearted.

Lucrezia (ironically). And indeed I should think myself fortunate to live with any one so pleasant, so well bred.

Tognina. You see through the eyes of your own kindness, and that is a merit added to your virtue.

Lucrezia. Dear lady, you are deceived. I have no merit.

Tognina. But what style, what charm!

Lucrezia (aloud to the Count). How utterly delightful she is!

Lasca. (I'm sure these fine sayings don't come from the heart!)

Lucrezia. If we go to Smyrna we shall have a splendid time, for we'll be friends and live together.

Tognina. And on the ship? When we're on board I hope we shall pass the time happily. I will take my spinet, and sometimes I'll lend it to you. I can accompany little pieces. And you?

Lucrezia. Just a bit.

Tognina. Oh, you'll be perfect. Are you soprano?

Lucrezia. By your leave.

Tognina. Splendid! I suppose you can get up to the top C?

Lucrezia. Oh, even a little further.

Tognina. Wonderful. I'm simply delighted. So much the more do I congratulate myself upon having a colleague of such talent. I am not among the cleverest—but you will hear for yourself. I have three perfect octaves.

Lucrezia. What a joy it is to know you're so clever!

Lasca. (It's wonderful to hear them.)

Tognina. Tell me, did you notice that other singer at the Turk's this morning?

Lucrezia. Yes. Who is she? What do they call her?

Tognina. The Chestnut.

Lucrezia. What does it mean—the Chestnut?

Tognina. The girl is a Bolognese, and in Bologna they make certain pastes out of chestnuts. So they gave her a nickname that fitted her country and her ability. Poor thing—she doesn't guess what is meant. It's more than twelve years that she's been learning music, and she doesn't even know the sol-fa. She can't control her voice, doesn't produce one note properly, is always out of tune, screeches, eats her words, and, in fact, has a hundred faults.

Lasca. (Now the real conversation begins.)

Lucrezia. And she sets herself up to sing with you. That's venturesome indeed! Apart from your singing and your knowledge, my dear lady, one can see that you have action and gesture. I should think that you have no equal as a performer. If you express yourself so excellently here in conversation, what won't you do on the stage? More even than anything else in you I admire that wonderfully natural gesture, that movement of the arms, that way you have of accompanying your words with movements of the head, the hands, and the shoulders. It just delights and enchants me.

Lasca. (Can you gibe at her any further, confound you?)

Tognina. Sometimes I'm afraid that I move a little *too* much, but it comes from my vivacity and my age.

Lucrezia. Of course—you're so young.

Tognina (*simpering*). Oh! now I'm quite old.

Lucrezia. How old? Eighteen?

Tognina. Oh! I've passed twenty.

Lucrezia. (Plus ten.)

Tognina. And *you* can't be twenty yet?

Lucrezia. I am, though.

Tognina. (So I should think.)

Lucrezia. And that Bolognese girl?

Tognina. You don't suppose she's eighteen?

Lucrezia. Oh, I should give her twenty-four.

Tognina. *And* the rest.

Lucrezia. But the Count says nothing.

Tognina. He stands there like a statue.

Lasca. I listen and marvel.

Tognina. We are talking of ages. What is yours?

Lasca. Mine? . . . Not past twenty-three.

Tognina. My dear! Twenty-three?

Lucrezia. Just put a finger in his mouth and see if he's cut his teeth.

Lasca. Well, justice all round. If you lessen your age, I've a right to lessen mine.

Tognina. (The brute.)

Lucrezia. I think I hear some one.

Lasca. It's the Bolognese girl.

Lucrezia. I'll go to meet her.

Tognina. No, no, stay here! Don't put yourself out for people like that.

Lucrezia. Excuse me, I must do my duty. This morning, it's true, both you ladies remained seated while I spoke standing. Of course, very likely that's done here; but in my country we believe in politeness. (*She goes to meet Annina.*)

Lasca (to *Tognina*). She hit at you just in time!

Tognina. She's conceited and rude. I can't endure her.

SCENE THREE

(Those present, and ANNINA led in by LUCREZIA.)

Tognina. How splendid, Signora Annina! We've been pining to see you.

Annina. Really?

Tognina. We've just been talking about you.

Annina. What could you have said?

Tognina. What you deserve.

Lucrezia. What befits you.

Lasca. And I'm a witness to that.

Annina. But I don't deserve such courtesies. You ladies are artists. I'm only an ignorant little thing.

Tognina. Fie, fie! you're too modest.

Annina. Tell me, Count, has our friend been yet?

Lasca. He hasn't turned up at present.

Tognina. The Turk? You're talking of the Turk? We're expecting him.

Lucrezia. He is honouring me with a visit.

Tognina. Dear Signora Annina, have you decided? You're going to Smyrna?

Annina. Please heaven, I shall.

Tognina (to the Count). (Count, what will they do with three ladies?)

Lasca (to Tognina). (Well, I couldn't do with one.)

Tognina. (Oh, really . . .)

Lasca. Sh! Here is Signor Ali. He comes at my bidding; and I warn you, ladies, that if you intend to bother him with any new points of etiquette I shall see that he goes away, and there's an end of it. If this condition doesn't suit you, and if any of you is annoyed by what I've said, pray understand that the whole matter means little or nothing to me. There are hundreds of ladies who are eager to go, and the principal part is already arranged. The first of you to talk, whine, or scream will be cut out of the enterprise.

Lucrezia. (If he's not deceiving, it looks as if I *shall* be leading lady.)

Annina. (One must be silent and resign oneself.)

Tognina. (Somehow or other I *must* get to Smyrna.)

SCENE FOUR

(Those present and ALL.)

Lasca. Come in, Signor Ali.

Ali. It is done?

Lasca. Nothing's done yet. I trust that you will be present when the contracts are made. Here you see three ladies who wish to go with you, and each of them has her good points.

Ali. Three ladies? Three?

Lasca. Hush! I'll tell you why. You can find places for all three without adding to the expense.

Ali. If they make so much devil about first and second, what about third?

Lasca. Don't you worry. The third will be employed as third lady, if there's such a part in the play; and if it needs only two she can take a small part in man's costume.

Annina. It certainly won't be me.

Tognina. Nor me. So there.

Lasca (to the women). Sh!

Lucrezia. As for me, I say nothing.

Ali. Count, arrange it you!

Lasca. Right, and I'll finish it off. Ladies, we want for our lead the lady who most pleases us and seems most suitable. If the others are not satisfied they can withdraw from the business, and they won't have cause to regret it.

Ali. Well done, Count, very well. I not speak more.

Lasca. I trust that on this occasion Signora Tognina and Signora Annina will therefore exercise some control. We have settled that the part of leading lady shall go to Signora Lucrezia.

Tognina. And you want me to put up with an insult like that?

Annina. You expect me to keep silent?

Lasca. Silence, or clear out.

Tognina. Signor Ali, what do you say?

Annina (to Ali). Sir, give me justice!

Ali. No speak with me. Count is Impresario. Count is master. O blessed Count!

Lasca. I like to do things briskly. Signora Lucrezia, go and pay your compliments to Signor Ali.

Lucrezia. Indeed, I thank the Impresario—and his assistant.

(*To Ali.*) But, please, what will my salary be?

Ali (to Lucrezia). Count—Count—he speak.

Lasca. How much does Signora Lucrezia require?

Lucrezia. Every one is aware . . .

Lasca. No, no—come to the point.

Lucrezia. A leading lady, a lady like myself, who is engaged to go to Smyrna . . .

Lasca. Enough of all that.

Lucrezia. You wouldn't give me less than six hundred guineas?

Lasca. The Impresario doesn't mean to go above four hundred.

Lucrezia. Oh, excuse me, sir, such pay . . .

Lasca. Very well, then. How much would Signora Tognina require as leading lady?

Tognina. Oh, I'm not mercenary, and I should be contented . . .

Lucrezia. Oh, if we're dealing in generosity, I'm capable of it, too, and I accept four hundred.

Lasca. So much for that.

Ali. Splendid, Count, you splendid.

Lasca. And how much does Signora Tognina require for the part of second lady?

Annina. And what of me?

Lasca. I'm not talking to you at present. Your turn will come.

Annina. Then you're going to make me . . .

Lasca. Silence, or clear out! Well, Signora Tognina?

Tognina. I should say . . . at least, at least . . .

Lasca. Would two hundred and fifty guineas suit you?

Tognina. I can't. Impossible!

Lasca. And you, Signora Annina?

Tognina. Wait, wait . . . board and travelling expenses paid?

Lasca. That's understood, and applies to every one. You accept?

Tognina (crushed). I accept.

Ali. Splendid, Count, you splendid.

Lasca. Now you, Signora Annina.

Annina. As third lady?

Lasca. Yes—if there's a third part.

Annina. An artist of my quality!

Lasca. I've ten who would jump at it.

Annina (crushed). And how much would you give me?

Lasca. A hundred guineas.

Annina. To a lady of my talent?

Lasca. Stay in or go out.

Annina. Good gracious!—I accept it.

Lasca (to Ali). It's all done. Everything's finished.

Ali. Splendid, Count. You ought to be made Pasha—made Vizier.

Lasca. Ho, there—some one from the inn! (*Enter Servant.*) Bring pen, ink, and paper at once. (*Exit Servant.*) We'll draw up the contracts immediately.

Lucrezia. And when shall we start?

Lasca. Tell us, Signor Ali, when do you think to set out?

Ali. Ship is under sail. To-morrow morning we can go. All the company shall come to my house to-morrow early. Bring everything to embark at Peota, and we go on board to wait good wind.

Lasca (to the ladies). You hear that? He expects you early to-morrow. Ah! here's the servant. Perhaps the leading lady will be so good as to sign first.

(*The Count and Lucrezia go to a table at the back. The Servant carries them the writing materials and goes out.*)

Tognina (to Ali). My poor Signor Ali! I'm terribly sorry for you. I speak sincerely, without envy, without self-interest, and it's the truth I'm telling you. The leading lady you chose will ruin the whole affair. You'll hear how Signora Annina will rail at it. I'd sooner give one of my eyes than have that woman start out with us.

Ali. She is not good?

Tognina. Good? She's an ignoramus. Can't act and can't sing.

Annina. Listen to me. I wager that in four days you'll be forced to send her back.

Ali. But the Count not knows her?

Tognina. Ah, sir, the Count is her cavalier. She is in his favour, and he swindles our Impresario because he's in love with her.

Annina. That's quite clear. And it's because of his passion that he's been unfair to us.

Ali. (It is possible the Count could deceive?)

Lasca (at the table). That's done! Come, ladies—if you intend to sign.

Tognina (to *Ali*). If I were your leading lady, I'd make your fortune. (She goes to the table.)

Annina (to *Ali*). You'd make a heap of money if you trusted me. (She goes to the table.)

(*Ali* ponders, walks about, passes his hand over his brow, twists his moustache, taps his feet, and, in general, shows his perturbation.)

Lucrezia. What's the matter, Signor Ali? You look upset.

Ali. I not know. I in doubt. I not understand well the guile of Italians, but I in doubt. I almost regret to have done what I have done.

Lucrezia. Why?

Ali. Because I pay to have good people—and I fear the music at Smyrna shall be bad.

Lucrezia. If you refer to those two singers, you have my sympathy. They've no idea of music; they lack the rudiments; they are so extremely bad that they can't get engagements even in Carnival time.

Ali. They are companions to you.

Lucrezia. Oh, begging your pardon, you will realize my knowledge and my brilliance at Smyrna.

Ali. Oh! I not know where I am.

Lasca (giving the papers to *Ali*). Here are the forms and the signatures.

Ali. I not know what to do. I not wish them.

Lasca. All right! I'll keep them, put them with the others, and bring them round to-morrow morning.

Tognina. Signor Ali, your servant! To-morrow morning I and my equipage will be with you in good time. Good-bye, sleep well, and remember to have some chocolate ready for me to-morrow. (Exit.)

Annina. I never take chocolate. Please have some good Cyprus wine. See that I have a bottle of it, with some biscuits. *(Exit.)*

Lucrezia. By your leave, sir, it's getting late, and I'm going to my room to undress. If you gentlemen desire to stay here, you're welcome. I leave you in possession. Signor Ali, your servant! I'll be with you early to-morrow morning. Count, your most humble servant!

SCENE FIVE

(COUNT LASCA and ALI; afterwards, NIBIO.)

Lasca. Signor Ali, thanks to me your company won't be weak in ladies, and you've got them at a price . . .

Ali. Count, I afraid that you for the beautiful lady will cheat me.

Lasca. Well, I never! Is this how you behave? Is this your gratitude for what I've done?

Ali. My dear Count, forgive. I not know . . . I quite lost. . . .

(Enter NIBIO.)

Nibio. Gentlemen—good news! I've booked the first musician at six hundred guineas and a second at two hundred.

Lasca. Whom have you as second?

Nibio. A certain Sganarel. . . .

Lasca. That idiot? *(To Ali.)* Sir, don't take him. He's an absurd creature who would make the opera ridiculous.

Nibio (to the Count). Pardon me, sir, he is quite as good as Carluccio, your protégé.

Ali (to Nibio). I not want musicians.

Nibio. It's down in writing. There's nothing to be done—and I have also the signatures of two tenors.

Ali. Without that I know?

Nibio. If you're going to-morrow you can't delay.

Lasca. Well, there he's right.

Nibio. And I've signed on all the hands you saw in your room.

Ali. And altogether, how many?

Nibio. I've reckoned it up and we shall have seventy.

Ali. Shalamanacabala!

Nibio. And, before you go, they all demand something on account.

Ali. How much they want?

Nibio. Altogether say five hundred guineas.

Ali. Give the devils five hundred and get out of my sight.
(*Exit.*)

Nibio. (Say what he will, the money's necessary. A hundred guineas for me, and the rest for distribution among the other poor creatures.)
(*Exit.*)

Lasca. What a tangled, miserable, and harassed life is that of an Impresario! I haunt the theatres; I am acquainted and familiar with the artists, men and women alike; but I've never wanted to put myself at the head of a theatrical enterprise. Oh, miserable managers! They go to endless trouble, and then—what happens? The opera crashes to earth with the manager underneath it.

ACT FIVE

SCENE ONE

A Room in Ali's Hotel.

(CARLUCCIO in travelling costume with furs, top-boots, a whip, and a travelling cap. Later, a SERVANT.)

Carluccio. Ho! look alive, look alive! (*bellowing and cracking the whip*). Are they still asleep? Is it a hoax? Do they mean to go or not?

Servant. What's all this row mean?

Carluccio. I called again and again, and no one answered.

Servant. Speak low, sir. Don't wake the visitors.

Carluccio. Is the Turk up yet?

Servant. He's up and he's out of the house.

Carluccio. Bring me some chocolate and toast.

Servant. And where do you think I'll find it?

Carluccio. What? No chocolate? The Impresario hasn't prepared it? Get some at a shop.

Servant. And who'll pay?

Carluccio. The Impresario.

Servant. Excuse me, he gave no such orders.

Carluccio. Then I'll pay.

Servant. It's early still; the shop isn't open. When it is, I'll send the boy.

Carluccio. But I can't wait. I've a delicate stomach—and I went without breakfast in order not to be late for that ass of an Impresario. Go, see if there's anything in the tavern here.

Servant. Sir, this is not a tavern. It's an inn.

Carluccio. Plague take all inns and all innkeepers! They behave like barmen and then object to having their places called taverns. Bring me something to eat.

Servant. There's nothing I can give you, and I don't mean to fetch you anything.

Carluccio. I'll box your ears. I'll give you a taste of this whip across your face.

Servant. You make me laugh. What's the good of a whip and top-boots on a ship?

Carluccio. Fool! People like me never travel without boots, and the whip is to keep the sailors awake.

Servant. You be careful! If you play the fool at sea they'll throw you overboard.

Carluccio. Idiot!

Servant (with vehemence). By jove! if I don't give you a hiding it's only because to thrash *you* would be like thrashing a sack.

Carluccio. But, my dear friend, I'm done up. I simply must refresh myself. Do be so good as to bring me something.

Servant. Oh, if you talk like that, it's different. I'll fetch you something at once.

Carluccio. What will it be?

Servant. A glass of warm water.

Carluccio. Water? For a man like me?

Servant. There's nothing else. If you want it, take it. If you don't, leave it. (*Exit.*)

SCENE TWO

(CARLUCCIO alone.)

Carluccio. What's become of that creature Nibio? I bet he's paying attention to one of the ladies instead of coming to me—instead of bringing me my first quarter's pay in advance as he promised. Confound him! I simply must get out of the house before daylight in order to avoid that mob of creditors.

(*Enter* MACCARIO attired for the journey, and wearing a special waistcoat.)

Maccario. (This is very extraordinary. No one about. It's gone five, and there's no one . . . Ah, here's the soprano!)

Carluccio. Signor Maccario, my greetings!

Maccario. Have you seen the Impresario?

Carluccio. He's gone out, the cad!

Maccario. And Nibio?

Carluccio. Not here yet.

Maccario. But he ought to have been here first!

Carluccio. Has he advanced you your quarter's salary?

Maccario. Me? Not a farthing. I got up early and went to see him. They said he'd gone out before dawn, but I simply must have some money before I start.

Carluccio. Ah, poor fellow! Debts, I suppose?

Maccario. Yes, sir. No debts, no credit, you know. Debts don't ruin a gentleman.

Carluccio. (That's what I say.)

Maccario. And, before starting, I shall have to buy some books I may need.

Carluccio. What sort of books?

Maccario. A Metastasio, an Apostolo Zeno, some of Pariati's works, a collection of old plays, and, above all, a good rhyming dictionary. At Smyrna I mean to work with a good heart. I'll write some marvellous plays.

Carluccio. Patchwork plays?

Maccario. My dear Signor Carluccio, you know me; and you know that when I do patchwork I'm serving your interests. You have only two songs—which you sing again and again, putting them into all the operas in which you perform; and you know how often you've made me alter the words to those two everlasting songs. I still remember the song that you made me change at Genoa. And because you gave me no time to think, I rhymed 'brow' to 'cloud' and left a spare 'd' in my quill.

Carluccio. O-ho—but your other poets allow themselves all the licence they want.

Maccario. True—poetic licence is permissible.

Carluccio. Look, here's the Bolognese woman, but the people with her—who the devil are they?

Maccario. Her mamma, her brother, and the man with dogs.

SCENE THREE

(Those present, and ANNINA attired for the journey, an OLD WOMAN and a LAD both badly dressed, and a SERVANT in livery, with two dogs attached to a strap. The OLD WOMAN seats herself at the back of the scene.)

Annina. Apparently, I'm the first. If I'd known that, I'd have stayed in bed an hour longer.

Carluccio. Seeing that I, the first soprano, am here, why shouldn't you be?

Annina. What can those two wretches be doing that they don't turn up? They must be tittivating themselves. I was a fool. Just so as not to keep any one waiting I made no toilet at all.

Carluccio. Who's coming? Who's keeping us waiting?

Maccario. The Lemonader and the Little Pumpkin.

Carluccio (to Annina, smiling). Is it true they've given you the smallest part?

Annina. Wait till we're off to Smyrna! We'll have it out then. For the moment I'm obliged to swallow this bitter pill, but once we've crossed the sea they shall learn who I am—Annina the Bolognese.

Carluccio. Quite right. You were never meant to be last. I'll uphold you against the Impresario and against the whole world, and if they oppose what I say to them and what I mean to do—I swear, as I live, I'll bring the whole opera to the ground.

SCENE FOUR

(Those present, and TOGNINA with one dog in her arms and another tied to a small cord. PASQUALINO with various boxes and bundles.)

Tognina. Here I am. But where's our illustrious leading lady? How stupid of me to get here before her! These important ladies always keep one waiting. Where is the Impresario? Where's Nibio? Where's the money in advance?

Maccario. The Impresario is not here, and we haven't seen Nibio either.

Tognina. What impudence! They didn't even send me a gondola. It's outrageous! Why, in order to get here I had to spend one-and-threepence of my own.

Pasqualino. Come, come. Don't make a fuss about one-and-threepence.

Tognina. Quiet—and look after my boxes.

Carluccio (to Tognina). Whatever does this mean, Signora? Aren't you playing the lead?

Tognina. What's that? Merit fetches a high price these days! That barbarous Impresario and that dear Count Lasca have done me this wrong for the sake of that minx of theirs.

Carluccio. You mean the Florentine?

Tognina. I do, sir. For the sake of that beauty! I've a good mind to tear up the contract.

Carluccio. Don't upset yourself. I'll find a way of humiliating her. I'll push her out. I'll say I won't sing with her!

Tognina. Suppose there's a duet—you know I can do it. If you and I were to sing together, every one would go mad about us.

Annina. If there's any call for duets, I may say I have five or six that are superb.

Tognina. Pardon me, Signora, you are hardly concerned. You are only third lady.

Annina. Whether I'm first or last, let's talk it over.

Tognina (to Carluccio). (You see? She has the impudence to set herself up beside *us*!)

Carluccio. I am the first soprano, and I shall want a leading lady who suits me.

Pasqualino. You'd better not kick up a row at present.

Carluccio. And what have you to do with my affairs? Perhaps you are jealous? In fact, that's delightful! You can make love in the house and I on the stage.

Tognina (to Pasqualino). Indeed, sir, we shall do as we like.

Pasqualino (throwing down all the boxes). There! I'm sick of hanging on to all this stuff.

Tognina. Look, look—the great brute! Take up those boxes!

Pasqualino. No, I'm sick of them.

Tognina. You, Signor Maccario—pick them up!

Maccario. I?

Tognina. Astonished, are you? You might well take a little trouble. It's often enough you've had a dinner off me.

Maccario. (Well, we're going to Smyrna, and I'll pay her back there. I'll give her a bad part, bad songs, bad everything. Trust me to be spiteful.)

Tognina. (Penniless and too proud!) (*To Annina's Servant.*) Here, young man, kindly collect my boxes.

Annina. Get your own servant. (*She plucks her servant by the arm and pulls him away.*)

Tognina. (A pretty pack they are! But when we're in Smyrna. . . .) (*She collects the boxes.*)

Carluccio. Ah! here's the Florentine girl.

Annina. And just about time. *Hasn't* she put it on thick? *Hasn't* she got herself up?

SCENE FIVE

(Those present, LUCREZIA with a dog, and a SERVANT who carries a parrot and a cat.)

Lucrezia. Ladies and gentlemen, my greetings. Pray, forgive me. Perhaps you've been waiting?

Carluccio. Not at all, my beauteous one, my goddess, my princess! You are the leading lady and have a right to keep them waiting.

Annina. (He must be fooling her.)

Tognina. (Aha! the leading lady! Wait till we're in Smyrna.)

Annina. (Did you ever! That parrot!)

Tognina. (That cat!)

Lucrezia. Where is the Impresario?

Maccario. He's gone out and hasn't come back yet.

Lucrezia. Why does he keep me here waiting? Before I get to sea I *must* have some idea what part of the ship I shall occupy.

Tognina. Oh, they'll have a special ship for you—a man-of-war.

Lucrezia. Signora, I didn't speak to you, and I shan't reply.

Carluccio (to *Lucrezia*). I may say I shall be pleased to share it with you.

Lucrezia. If we're close, so much the better.

Carluccio. Undoubtedly. You are my leading lady, you are my queen. We must keep at a distance from the common crowd.

Tognina (to *Carluccio*). (You mean that?)

Carluccio. (Don't worry.)

Annina (to *Carluccio*). (You're speaking seriously?)

Carluccio. (Fear nothing. I am yours.—These dear singers are all enchanted by my talent and my beauty!)

SCENE SIX

(Those present and NIBIO with a large number of lesser theatre-people.)

Nibio. Well, here we are all together.

Maccario. Signor Nibio, the money.

Tognina. Money, good sir!

Annina. That money you promised me.

Lucrezia. We've looked for you everywhere. What about that little advance?

Pasqualino. If we're going, we shall need the money.

Nibio. Look out—don't eat me! I can't give you money if I haven't any. Wait for the Impresario, and he'll give each of you what he promised.

Carluccio. But where *is* the fellow?

Nibio. I'm informed, I've been told, that he was seen with Count Lasca. They'll be here shortly.

Lucrezia. But whatever are they doing? Where on earth have they gone?

Nibio. I suppose they have gone to the bank to draw the money.

Tognina. They've waited till now?

Carluccio. It's an insult.

SCENE SEVEN

(Those present and COUNT LASCA.)

Lasca. Ladies and gentlemen, your servant.

Nibio. Where is the Impresario?

Carluccio. Where's that creature Ali?

Tognina. Is he coming at all?

Annina. Does he mean to go or not?

Lasca. I'm delighted to see this charming company assembled and ready. The Impresario salutes you all, pays his compliments to you all, and has given me this purse containing two thousand ducats, with instruction that I should distribute it and give each of you the right proportion. I hope you will all be satisfied. (*They all put their hands out.*) One moment! Before I distribute the money, I must inform you of something else. The Impresario, worried to death by his musicians, his agent, his poet, and his stage hands, was not able to sleep last night. During his vigil he has thought the matter over and has resolved to abandon the hopes which he had meant to realize at Smyrna. He sends, therefore, these two thousand ducats as a gift to the company, and profiting by the favourable wind, has already departed for his country.

Tognina. Oh, the vile Impresario!

Annina. I can't believe it!

Lucrezia. He abandons a lady like me in this way?

Nibio. Look sharp, Count. Begin your division of the two thousand ducats.

Carluccio. Five hundred for me.

Maccario (to the Count). Remember, we must all have a bite.

Lasca. My dear children, if this money is divided among so many, each of you will get precious little. Listen! I've an idea, a proposal to make. I'll keep it on deposit. It can serve as capital. You shall all form a society and start what we might call communal opera. Profit and loss will be in common. If things go well, you divide the profits; if badly, you don't lose anything of your own.

Carluccio. Am I not here? I alone am enough to make the fortune of such a venture.

Lucrezia. I'm leading lady.

Tognina. If we're really to be communal, I am the elder and I must have the lead.

Annina. Smyrna's over and done with, and we can't have that now.

Lasca. A truce to all jealousy and squabbling. Let the company remain as it was first established. If that doesn't suit you, I intend to dissolve the new society and to act as judge on behalf of the Turk. In that event I shall dispose of this money in my own way. I shall use it as I think best—that is to say, for the benefit of the person among you who is best behaved; and those of you who are troublesome I shall punish.

Lucrezia. Well, I confide myself to the Count.

Tognina. I'm no quarreller. You shan't say I'm exacting.

Annina. Let us defer to the knowledge and goodness of the Count.

Pasqualino. You know me, sir, and I put myself in your hands.

Maccario. And so do I. I'm a good fellow who's pleased with anything.

Nibio. If you agree, sir, I'll take over the management.

Tognina. Signora Lucrezia is my best friend.

Annina. Let's all make it up.

Lucrezia. Well, I'm quite ready. Here's a kiss for you.

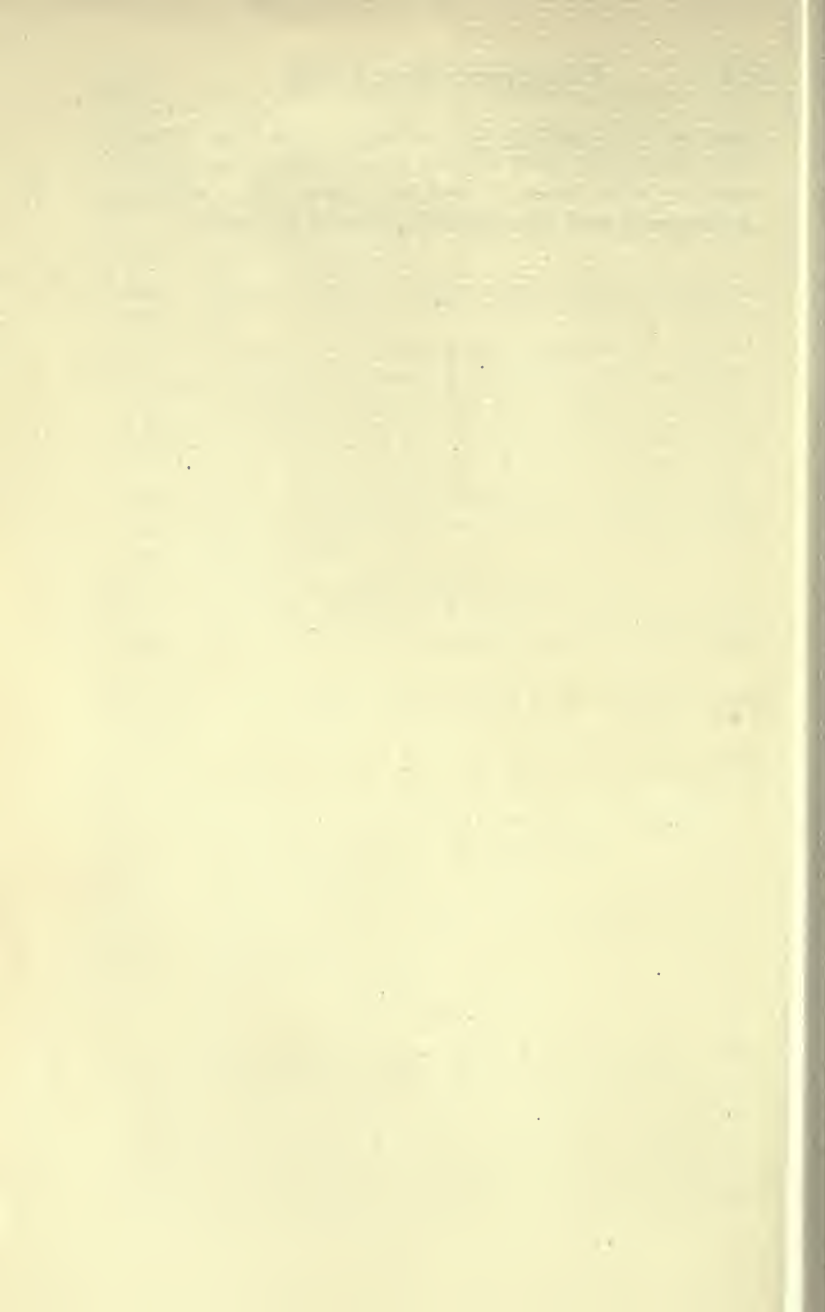
Annina. And for you.

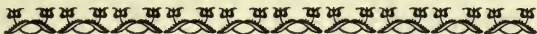
Tognina. And here's another.

(*All three kiss.*)

Lasca. Then everything goes well. I'm delighted. I hope you'll remain at peace, and all contribute to the general interest. That is the difference between a communal theatre and one that is run by a manager. Under a paymaster, everybody is proud, pushing, and presumptuous, but when the musicians themselves are running the affair

they are all contented and willingly work their hardest. The Impresario from Smyrna is an excellent warning to any one who desires to venture upon such a difficult, burdensome, and, for most folk, ruinous enterprise.





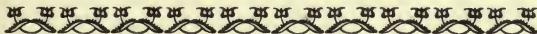
THE GOOD GIRL

A COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS



Produced for the first
time in Venice during
the Carnival of 1749

Translated by MARGUERITE TRACY



CHARACTERS

OTTAVIO, *Marquis of Ripa Verde.*

BEATRICE, *his Wife.*

PANTALONE DE BISOGNOSI, *a Venetian Merchant, believed to be the Father of Lelio, and Protector of Bettina.*

BETTINA, *a Venetian Girl.*

CATTE, *a Laundress, Wife of Arlecchino and sister of Bettina.*

MESSER MENEGO CAINELLO, *the Marquis's Boatman, believed to be the Father of Pasqualino.*

LELIO, *believed to be the Son of Pantalone, and discovered to be the Son of Messer Menego.*

PASQUALINO, *believed to be the Son of Messer Menego, and discovered to be the Son of Pantalone.*

DONNA PASQUA, *of Palestrina, Wife of Messer Menego.*

BRIGHELLA, *the Marquis's Servant.*

ARLECCHINO, *Husband of Catte.*

NANNE, *Boatman.*

TITA, *Boatman.*


A COFFEE-HOUSE BOY.

A BOY *who, as is the custom in Venice, cries the tickets for the Comedy.*

SCANNA, *Usurer.*

A CAPTAIN OF POLICE, *with his Men.*

THE SCENE IS AT VENICE



THE GOOD GIRL

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

The Marquis's Room.

(Present, the MARQUIS (OTTAVIO) in dressing-robe, seated at a table, writing, and the MARQUISE (BEATRICE) in evening dress.)

Ottavio. Yes, ma'am, I heard you. Let me write this letter.

Beatrice. To-night's the assembly at the Countess's.

Ottavio. Is it? (*Writing*) (*Dear Friend . . .*)

Beatrice. I hope you'll go too.

Ottavio. Can't. (*If I have not replied to your letter . . .*)

Beatrice. But then who'll accompany me?

Ottavio. I'll order the gondola. (*I beg you'll excuse me, because . . .*)

Beatrice. And you want me to come home alone?

Ottavio. Get some one to escort you. (*I beg you'll excuse me, because my affairs . . .*)

Beatrice. But whom can I get to accompany me?

Ottavio. The devil—who takes you there! (*. . . My affairs have prevented me. . .*)

Beatrice. That's right. Fly into a rage.

Ottavio. (*Nevertheless, I've not neglected the matter.*)

Beatrice. There's no more living with you.

Ottavio. Oh, hold your tongue. (*I've spoken to the merchant in question . . .*)

Beatrice. What fine breeding!

Ottavio. (*And he has assured me that very soon . . .*)

Beatrice. Very soon I'll leave this house.

Ottavio. Would to heaven . . . (*Very soon he will send you the stuff . . .*)

Beatrice. This is some woman's order.

Ottavio. It is, ma'am. (*Writes.*)

Beatrice. I congratulate her.

Ottavio. Si'ora, *will* you be so kind as to leave me alone?
(*Writes.*)

Beatrice. Every one knows my prudence . . .

Ottavio. Yes, ma'am. (*Writes.*)

Beatrice. Every one knows my delicacy . . .

Ottavio. Yes, ma'am. (*Writes.*)

Beatrice. I am a woman of honour.

Ottavio. Yes, ma'am. (*Writes.*)

Beatrice. You're mad.

Ottavio. No . . . ma'am. (*Writes.*)

SCENE TWO

(Those present and BRIGHELLA.)

Brighella. Your Excellency, the Count has come to take your ladyship to the assembly.

Beatrice (*to Ottavio*). Well, sir, no orders?

Ottavio. No, ma'am. (*Writes.*)

Beatrice. Will you come with me?

Ottavio. No, ma'am. (*Writes.*)

Beatrice. Do you want me to stay?

Ottavio. No, ma'am. (*Writes.*)

Beatrice. Then, I'm off.

Ottavio. Yes, ma'am; yes, ma'am; yes, ma'am.

Beatrice. (I'm off, I'm off, and I don't need any urging. This is where our art comes in; pretending to our husbands that we love what we hate and don't want what we do want.)

SCENE THREE

(OTTAVIO and BRIGHELLA.)

Ottavio. Devil take her! I can't bear the sight of her, and she *will* have it that I am jealous. Jealous! I should be

mad three times over. Mad, because it's not handsome to make one prevaricate, because I don't love her, and mad, because jealousy's no longer the fashion. Brighella, have you seen Bettina?

Brighella. Excellency, yes. I've seen her. I gave the message, but I'm afraid we shall do nothing in that quarter.

Ottavio. Why?

Brighella. She's too good a girl.

Ottavio. Who's girl is she? Did you find out?

Brighella. Her father was master of a schooner, but he is dead, and now she has neither father nor mother.

Ottavio. Who looks after her, then?

Brighella. A married sister of hers, a Si'ora Catte, wife of one, Arlecchino Battocchio, a rough fellow with a tongue like a bell-clapper, always wagging.

Ottavio. We might manage a meeting through them.

Brighella. Your Excellency shall leave it to me; I'll speak to Si'ora Catte; she's a good soul, and I hope that through her there'll be something doing.

Ottavio. The girl attracts me; I'll take her under my protection.

Brighella. She's already under the protection of a certain merchant, who's called Pantalone de Bisognosi.

Ottavio. A merchant will make way for a marquis.

Brighella. Your Excellency, I've learned something else.

Ottavio. She's in love?

Brighella. Your Excellency knows who her lover is?

Ottavio. Some rascal.

Brighella. Pasqualino, son of Menego, your Excellency's gondolier.

Ottavio. Good. Good. He returns her love?

Brighella. He's dying of it.

Ottavio. Then, this marriage might well be brought about.

. . . And later . . . with my protection . . . Yes, yes.

Go along, call Cainello and tell him I want him.

Brighella. At once, Excellency. (Marriages made for protection? That's *too* much!)

SCENE FOUR

(The MARQUIS, then MENEGO.)

Ottavio. It's like this. I could use that youth either as boatman or footman or valet, and the girl as housekeeper. And I like the chit.

Menego. Excellency, I am here at your lordship's orders.

Ottavio. Tell me, are you contented in my service?

Menego. Perfectly. When I get my pay at the end of the month I don't ask for better. I can't complain of your lordship's treatment. Your Excellency is a man of heart, made in the Venetian mould, open-handed and generous; and for you, sir, I'd stand on the poop three days and nights without food. But her Excellency, the mistress—there, I'm sorry—but I can't say the same of her. It's scarce daybreak before she has me called with 'Quick, Menego—into the boat; go to the hairdresser's and tell her to come directly.' Or, 'Hurry, rouse the doctor, the mistress has hysterics.' Or, 'Fetch the barber, the mistress must have a purge.' In the bright middle of the morning there's Menego on the poop and the mistress abroad over half Venice. After dinner in the piazza off goes Menego with the boat to the Ridotto.* In the evening, to the play—back to the house at seven—then out half the night; but the half of a ducat never comes my way!

Ottavio. Poor Cainello, I'm sorry for you. You're alone to do everything, and alone you can't supply all needs. Tell me, haven't you a son?

Menego. Excellency, yes.

Ottavio. What trade do you make him follow?

Menego. I want him to follow his father's calling, but he has no genius for it. Once I made him try standing on the poop, and he went overboard heels up.

Ottavio. You ought to teach him.

Menego. But he'll do nothing except play the gentleman! All who see him agree that he is like me in nothing; and

* Gambling-house.

there are scoundrels who go so far as to make remark about it—you understand me. But in matters of honour, like that, Donna Pasqua, my wife—I need hardly say—has always been the soul of delicacy.

Ottavio. Your wife's living?

Menego. Thanks be to heaven, she is, sir.

Ottavio. Where is she now?

Menego. At Palestrina, her birthplace. She went to see her parents. I expect her back to-night or to-morrow morning.

Ottavio. Ah, well, send me your son. I want to see him.

Menego. Very good, sir. But at the moment I don't know where to lay my hand on him.

Ottavio. Well, then, send him to me when you have found him.

Menego. No orders for the boat?

Ottavio. For me, no. See if her ladyship wants it.

Menego. Oh, she's never at a loss for a boat. Every day there are three or four who race to the judge's stand. This morning the Count won the race. After which a second and a third boat bumped in behind, so I fancy, your Excellency, the little pig will fall to you.* (Exit.)

Ottavio. How amusing these boatmen are! On the other hand, how pretty Bettina is! If I bring her into the house, I shouldn't want any unpleasantness coming up with my wife. I'll contrive to marry her to this youth. . . . Meanwhile . . . enough . . . *Argent fait tout.* (Exit.)

SCENE FIVE

A Street with view of a Loggia annexed to Bettina's house.

(BETTINA on the Loggia, knitting.)

Bettina. Oh, the blessed sun—how I love it! Thank heaven for this loggia. As I'm not one to be out of the house all day, I should die of melancholy if I hadn't this place. And here I'm safe from gossips. They do talk so, because Si'or Pantalone comes to the house. Let them say what they

* That is, to win the last prize in a regatta, which is a little pig.

please—he is like a father to me, that old man; and it's out of charity that he helps me. And he has promised to get me a husband, too; but if he doesn't pick Pasqualino, I won't marry at all. And there *is* Pasqualino, blessings on him! His dear funny face, his dear little figure!

SCENE SIX

(BETTINA, and PASQUALINO in a Venetian cloak.)

Pasqualino. There she is—always in the loggia showing herself to every one.

Bettina. Look you, what manners! I was here for you, my dear boy. You can't say you've seen me talking to anybody.

Pasqualino. I don't like you to sit on the loggia; it's too common.

Bettina. But then if you passed I shouldn't see you.

Pasqualino. When I pass, I'll knock. Don't put me in a temper.

Bettina. Don't get in a temper. I'll do what you say.

Pasqualino. But to-day will you keep me standing here?

Bettina. What do you want?

Pasqualino. To be allowed to come in.

Bettina. Oh, you can't come into the house.

Pasqualino. No? Why?

Bettina. Good girls don't receive lovers in the house.

Pasqualino. What a fib! Why, Tonina lets into *her* house as many as care to come.

Bettina. If they do wrong, so much the worse for them. But I'm a good girl.

Pasqualino. When may I, then?

Bettina. When you've given me the token.

Pasqualino. I'll give it you here and now.

Bettina. Have you asked for me yet?

Pasqualino. Why, no—you've neither father nor mother.

Bettina. Still, I've a married sister. She stands in the place of a mother to me.

Pasqualino. Very well, I'll speak with her.

Bettina. Do as you please, but listen: you'll have to tell Si'or Pantalone too.

Pasqualino. What has that old man to do with it? Is he your uncle?

Bettina. He is my benefactor who's promised me the dowry.

Pasqualino. What? So you've a benefactor? I understand. Now I know the sort you are.

Bettina. What's that, Si'or Fool's-head? If I have a benefactor, it is an old man who is good to me out of charity. I'm amazed at you.

Pasqualino. Come, now, you needn't get angry.

Bettina. If I damaged *your* reputation, you wouldn't look at it like that, I'm quite sure.

Pasqualino. You, cross like this? Don't you love me?

Bettina. I love you even too much, but I prize my good name above everything.

Pasqualino. In that case, what am I to do now?

Bettina. Talk to my sister.

Pasqualino. I'll talk to your sister with pleasure, but not in front of that ass Arlecchino, your brother-in-law.

Bettina. Wait. I'll call her into the court.

Pasqualino. It may be that we'll get everything settled, once for all.

Bettina. How do you mean?

Pasqualino. That I'll come into the house.

Bettina. All in good time. I don't mean to do as so many others have done. They attract the lovers in, the lovers grow tired of them, and the girls lose credit. (*Exit.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(PASQUALINO, then CATTE.)

Pasqualino. Now, I like that. One can see that here's a good girl. I did it to try her; and if she had opened her door to me, I should never have set foot in her house again. But here comes Si'ora Catte, her sister. If the truth were

known, I'm a trifle bashful, but I must pluck up courage and speak boldly.

Catte (*observing the sky*). The way it is clouding up, I'm afraid it's going to rain.

Pasqualino. Your servant, Si'ora *Catte*.

Catte. Oh, good-day yourself, Si'or *Pasqualino*.

Pasqualino. You're afraid of the rain?

Catte. Yes, indeed. I've done my laundry and I want to hang out the linen, but I distrust the weather.

Pasqualino. If you were unmarried you'd say that your lover was unloving.

Catte. Ah, you know that proverb:

'When a girl launders and sunshine's above,
A sure sign it is of her lover's true love.'

But I'll tell you, it wasn't I who did the washing. *Bettina*, my sister, did it, and if it rains it's a sign that her lover is making light of her.

Pasqualino. Her lover does love her, and he says it from his heart.

Catte. And who is this lover who loves her? Do you know him?

Pasqualino. Si'ora *Catte*, don't you know?

Catte. I? No—on my honour.

Pasqualino. I'd tell you, but I'm bashful.

Catte. Oho! I see it in your eyes. You're the one who loves her.

Pasqualino. It's true. *Bettina* is my sweetheart.

Catte. Tell me, then, what are your intentions?

Pasqualino. Good intentions. The best.

Catte. How do you mean?

Pasqualino. To marry her. And as she has neither father nor mother, and as you are her sister and married, I ask you to give her to me for wife.

Catte. Tell me, son, your father—Messer *Menego*—will approve?

Pasqualino. I've not told him anything.

Catte. What is your trade?

Pasqualino. My father wants me to be a boatman, but I'd rather go into a shop and be apprenticed.

Catte. What kind of shop, my boy?

Pasqualino. I don't know. I *had* thought of having an old clothes shop. I've seen so many begin by selling broken boxes, old iron, and old rags in the balcony of a closed shop, and in a short time they've donned a wig and have opened a marvellous shop and have bought entirely new stock.

Catte. That's fine talk, but the devil's flour all goes in bran. What I've seen is that if one is obliged to *sell* an article, he is paid two for what is worth six; but that if one wants to *buy* he must give twelve for what is worth four. Besides, those dealers make a business of letting lodgings to certain bad women. Enough. It's a business that doesn't please me at all.

Pasqualino. I'll go into a coffee-house.

Catte. Oh, dear son, there are so many, that they eat one another. Apart from the most successful popular ones, believe me, the others make a sorry shift of it. When a young man opens a new one, there are immense expenses—mirrors, pictures, painting, lights, Alexandria coffee, extra fine sugar—huge items. They all make you put more money in, then you have to close, the creditors settle you up, and you've failed. In order to make a success of it one ought to have the protection of one of those fine ladies of light morals who sing the birds down out of the trees, and then coffee and the cold drinks are not enough. Whoever courts their favours must countenance illicit behaviour, and that means turning the coffee-shop into a rogue's house.

Pasqualino. Then what *can* I do?

Catte. I'll talk to my sister. I'll talk to Si'or Pantalone, and I believe it will come out happily. Give her a fine ring, and me my commission. (Poor boy, I'm sorry for you. I'm always sorry for young men. If I weren't married, my sister might find herself another beau. See how handsome he is; if he doesn't properly make one lose one's heart!)

(*Exit, going into the house.*)

Pasqualino. Oh, how dear Si'ora Catte is. She's worth a million. I've a hope that she'll make everything happy for me. Two hundred ducats for some would be nothing, but for a judicious person it's something. Certainly, a fashionable marriage would swallow up the dowry, and over and above the dowry, but that's not my way. One pair of gloves, a gown, a cloak, and a little dress of silk, and that's enough. Wedding breakfast? None. Wedding party? None. The bread of the fool is the first eaten.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE EIGHT

Bedroom in Bettina's House.

(Present, BETTINA and CATTE.)

Bettina. And then, what did he say?

Catte. That he wants you for wife.

Bettina. And you? What did you say?

Catte. That we'd see about it.

Bettina. You ought to have said Yes, right away. What does your 'see about it' signify? It would be a fine thing if he changed his mind! Listen. If he drops me, I'm sorry for you—you'll see.

Catte. Ih! Ih! You've the very devil in you. You're in a great hurry to get married.

Bettina. You married, didn't you? I want to get married, it's true, but I don't at all want to do what you did.

Catte. What do you mean? What did I do?

Bettina. Eh, well, well, the bread-woman told me all.

Catte. You wicked child—I'll box your ears!

Bettina. Box my ears! The only one who could do that is dead.

Catte. I'm in the place of a mother to you. I feed you.

Bettina. Yes, indeed. You feed me? That poor old man gives me money, and on that you live, you and your husband. Poor Si'or Pantalone! We must be tactful.

Catte. Well, if he *must* come here boring me to death—that old silly—let him spend!

Bettina. If you annoy him he won't come any more.

Catte. What does that matter? Another will come.

Bettina. Oh, that, no.

Catte. If you only knew it, little fool, there's a marquis who's in love with you.

Bettina. That's nothing to me. No, no, no. Let him go his way, and the devil take him.

Catte. Silly girl! The other day he passed in the street, and never looked at any of these women. If you'd seen all the gold there was on his cloak.

Bettina. Are you going to stop, or do you want me to send you away?

Catte. Come, you minx, a little more respect.

Bettina. And you, a little more sense.

Catte. So we're to see the goslings leading the geese to water!*

Bettina. Si'ora, yes, when it happens that the geese have no brains.

Catte. Si'ora, doctress of wisdom, console yourself; here's your old party. I knew him by his cough. He makes me quite squeamish in the stomach.

Bettina. He loves me as if he were my father, and treats me like a daughter.

Catte. Sly little wretch! Not even you will make me believe that.

Bettina. Evil always believes evil.

SCENE NINE

(Those present and PANTALONE.)

Pantalone (*from within*). Children, may I come in?

Bettina. Come in, come in, Si'or Pantalone.

Catte. Our house has become a museum. Always antiquities.

Pantalone. How are you, child? Are you well?

Bettina. Well; and you, sir?

Pantalone. Yes, for my years.

* Tuscan proverb. Means that the youngest will guide the eldest in matters of judgment.

Catte. Dear Si'or Pantalone, don't say such ugly words. Old? One would take you for a man of forty. Certainly, I'll never have words enough to praise all your charity. If it weren't for you, where should we be? My husband earns nothing. What women can earn—you know how little that is. I'm not ashamed to say it to you. We hardly knew where to find a meal. Heaven sent you. Blessed Heaven.

Pantalone. Where I can help you, my dear child, let me know. Take this half ducat and buy something with it.

Catte. Heaven will reward you. Stay, make yourself at home. Bettina has something to say to you. I'll go and buy a pullet. Good day, Excellency. (For half a ducat one might do more than make a fool of an old man.) (*Exit.*)

SCENE TEN

(PANTALONE and BETTINA.)

Pantalone. (That woman goes out and leaves her alone. The child is not well cared for in this house. I shall have to remedy that.)

Bettina. Are you tired? Won't you sit?

Pantalone. Yes, indeed, my daughter. I'll sit. Sit you down also.

Bettina. Si'or . . . yes. I'll go on with my knitting.

Pantalone. You don't need to work. Sit here, and talk to me a little.

Bettina. I talk with my tongue, not with my hands. I mean, I can talk and work at the same time.

Pantalone. Brava! you're an industrious girl. But tell me, my dear, do you want to stay for ever in your sister's house?

Bettina. No—I certainly don't.

Pantalone. What would you like to do?

Bettina. Me? Si'or Pantalone, I am not ashamed to tell you the truth. I'd like to get married.

Pantalone. That's no cause for shame. Better married than maid. Tell me, daughter, have you some one in your mind?

Bettina. Yes, sir, there's one lad who isn't displeasing to me.

Pantalone. Dear child, who is he?

Bettina. Oh, I can't conceal it. He's the son of Messer Menego Cainello.

Pantalone. Listen, Bettina. I don't say he's not a good lad, of good habits; but you must take into consideration that he has no trade. Getting married is quickly done, but one must think of what comes after. When there's nothing to eat, love is forgotten. No, daughter, I don't want you to throw yourself away. I love you, you know, but with real love; don't be in such a hurry. Who knows, a bit of good fortune might happen to fall your way.

Bettina. Eh, Si'or Pantalone, no good fortune can fall to a poor girl.

Pantalone. An honest girl can be married by any one.

Bettina. *The time has gone by when Bertha spun.* I remember how my dear grandmother used to say, and my mother, too, that in their day an honest girl was more prized than a rich one, because people said that the biggest dowry a wife could bring was good sense and knowing how to run a house. But these days we see just the contrary. No one wants a poor good girl, even if she's pretty. To get married you must have one of two things; either lots of money or very little reputation.

Pantalone. No, Bettina, you mustn't judge from the great majority. Even in these days there are marriages in the old fashion; but you don't hear of them often, because foolish people are always more talked about than sensible people. But enough, I don't want to hear you talking like this. You must know that I have so much esteem for you that if I weren't so old, Bettina—yes, indeed, it wouldn't be very difficult for me to marry you myself.

Bettina (withdraws a little). Well, well, thank you for your good affection.

Pantalone. What is it? What do you mean? You move away? Are you afraid to be close to me?

Bettina. (I don't want the charity of the old man to become less disinterested.)

Pantalone. Come, let's speak plainly. Out of charity, I've taken the responsibility of protecting you. I've promised to find you a husband. I've promised two hundred ducats—I'm a gentleman, and I'll even give three hundred—but I don't want to throw them away. I don't want you to drown. I repeat, my little dove, that if you don't abhor my years, if you're not set on having a young man who may ruin you, and if you'll make the best of an old one, who loves you so dearly . . .

Bettina. It's blowing up a big gale. Please, my dear friend, let me close the balcony.

Pantalone. (I see. No hope for me.)

Bettina. Ah! that's better.

Pantalone. So, my child, my talk has given you a chill? What is it? Speak plainly, answer me freely.

Bettina. You wish me to speak plainly, and I will. Until now I've allowed you to come to the house because you never insinuated that, at your age, you'd think of falling in love, or I swear to you, on my honour as a maid, I should never have let you come. If the dowry of two hundred ducats that you want to give me is a gift from your generous heart, from a father and a gentleman, I'll accept your charity. But if you've any design at the back of it, I warn you that I don't want any old man for husband.

Pantalone. What I've done I've done out of good will, and I'll go on doing it. I'll always be your father, and will look on you as my daughter. I am ashamed of the weakness I showed, and I feel like crying—I don't know whether on your account or on mine.

Bettina. Oh, nonsense, Si'or Pantalone. Go to the Rialto, it's already late.

Pantalone. Well, I'll go. But I'll come again. You don't mind if I come back?

Bettina. Not if you come in the future as you came before.

Pantalone. Very good, my dear. I love you from my heart, and you shall see what I'll do for you. I expect Lelio, my

son, from Leghorn. He writes that he is not succeeding very well, and that he is coming soon to have me arrange a marriage for him, after which I shall retire into my house on the Terrazio. If you liked, you could make yourself mistress of everything.

Bettina. I don't want so much grandeur. I'm content with what you promised me.

Pantalone. My child, don't persist obstinately in your opinion. Listen to those who are older than you. Youth often falls when it tries to fly in its own fashion. I beg you, accept my advice if you won't accept my heart. Be an obedient daughter to me, though you disdain to become my wife. (Exit.)

SCENE ELEVEN

(BETTINA, then CATTE.)

Bettina. I want my Pasqualino, and I don't want any others. He is my equal. I don't want to live in grandeur. Titles don't furnish meals. How often one sees the great lady go out with a little bag under her cloak and a quarter of flour hid in her handkerchief!

Catte. Oh, sister, I'm distressed to death.

Bettina. What's the matter with you? What did you see?

Catte. Oh, bad luck to whoever left the door open!

Bettina. Has something been taken?

Catte. Eh, exactly. That Marquis that I told you about found it open and walked straight in.

Bettina. Well, he *has* a nerve! Send him away at once.

Catte. Oh, I can't! Why, he's on the stairs. I'm that angry, I could burst.

SCENE TWELVE

(Those present and OTTAVIO.)

Ottavio. Good day, young women.

Catte. Your Excellency!

Ottavio. You're the Cat?

Catte. Si'ora Catte, at your lordship's service.

Ottavio. And that's your sister Bettina?

Catte. Yes, your Excellency.

Bettina. (I feel hot as a new laid egg.)

Ottavio (to Catte). How is it she doesn't even salute me?

Catte. Poor child! Young people are so shy.

Bettina. (A curse on this house. If there were another door, I'd go.)

Ottavio. Pretty child—good day.

Bettina. 'Cellency.

Ottavio. What makes you so discourteous?

Bettina. I behave as I'm made.

Ottavio. As you are fair, be also kind.

Bettina. Fair or foul, I'm not for your lordship.

Ottavio. (Her disdain attracts me.)

Bettina. (May he come to grief in his wig.)*

Ottavio. Si'ora Catte.

Catte. Excellency?

Ottavio. I should relish a cup of coffee.

Catte. We've no coffee, only a few drops of polentina.

Ottavio. The shop is not far; you might do me the favour to go and get some. Here. (*Gives her some money.*)

Catte. Willingly, Excellency.

Bettina (to Catte). No, no, you're not to go out.

Ottavio. Have some cakes sent, too.

Catt. Ah, your Excellency means little biscuits. How sweet these strangers are. They have words that just perfectly enchant one. (*Exit.*)

SCENE THIRTEEN

(OTTAVIO and BETTINA.)

Bettina. (My sister has precious little sense!)

Ottavio. Come here; sit down.

Bettina. I'm not tired.

* A malediction in use among the lower classes regarding the nobility.

Ottavio. But why stay on your feet?

Bettina. Because I want to grow tall.

Ottavio. You're tall enough. It wouldn't hurt you to fatten up a little, though.

Bettina. I haven't to suit your lordship.

Ottavio. But sit down here a bit.

Bettina. Really, I can't.

Ottavio. Very well. Then I'll get up.

Bettina (*watching the door*). (And sister doesn't come.)

Ottavio (*approaching her*). Tell me, are those bracelets gold?

Bettina (*brusquely*). Yes, sir, gold.

Ottavio. Let me see.

Bettina. Your lordship can look at your own things.

Ottavio. Don't be so impertinent.

Bettina. I make no apologies, and if your lordship is not at his ease, he can go elsewhere.

Ottavio. You order me out?

Bettina. Oh, I ordered you out some time ago.

Ottavio. And it has not occurred to you that I can make your fortune?

Bettina. My poor fortune! Indeed, there are gentlemen who, when they've spent ten ducats, think they've made a girl's fortune.

Ottavio. You talk like that because you don't know me.

Bettina. But tell me, your Excellency, you want me perhaps for wife?

Ottavio. I? Oh no. You see, I've a wife already.

Bettina. Your lordship has a wife, and yet you come to the house of an honest girl, a girl that's respected? What does your lordship think I am? One of the good-humoured ladies? We're in Venice, you know. In Venice there are pastimes for whoever wants them—if you go on the promenade in the Piazza, if you go where the blinds are drawn and the cushions are on the balconies, or really to those girls who hang about their doorsteps; but in honourable Venetian houses don't expect to get hold of girls so easily. You strangers who go away from here, when you

talk of Venetian women, put them all in one lot; but I tell you Venetian girls may have their shortcomings, but in the matter of honour—

Venetian girls are a treasure
 Not to be lightly won.
 They are gold not found at pleasure,
 That takes a tarnish for none.
 Lucrece is the pride of Rome,
 Who thwarted Tarquin's thirst,
 But for steadfast honour, look home—
 'Tis Venetian girls come first!

Ottavio (approaching). Brava! my Bettina.

Bettina. I tell you that, so you may go back to your own affairs.

Ottavio. You see these earrings? (*Brings out from his pocket a case with a pair of diamond pendants.*)

Bettina. Your lordship may wear them himself.

Ottavio. They're diamonds, you know that?

Bettina. I don't care a fig what they are.

Ottavio. I understand. You want to choose for yourself. Here's this little purse full of guineas. (*Shows her a little purse.*)

Bettina. Money makes no impression on me.

Ottavio. What does give you pleasure?

Bettina. My good reputation.

Ottavio. Do I prejudice your good reputation?

Bettina. Yes, sir, you do. A fine nobleman doesn't come to a good girl's house 'for a bundle of leeks.'*

Ottavio. I'll get you a husband.

Bettina. I don't need your lordship for that.

Ottavio. You think I don't know that you're in love with Pasqualino, Cainello's son?

Bettina. If your lordship knows that, I'm glad of it. I love him, and I don't want any one else.

Ottavio. You know, Cainello is my boatman.

* He doesn't come for nothing.

Bettina. That's no affair of mine.

Ottavio. You must see that I can contribute to your happiness.

Bettina. Your lordship doesn't figure in our marriage at all.

Ottavio. I can also give you a good dowry.

Bettina. I tell your lordship that I don't need you in any way.

Ottavio. Oh yes. You have your merchant. You need him. Him you like.

Bettina. He is an old man. He has known me from a child, and no one can think ill of it. There's justice in this place, and I'm not afraid of ugly looks, you hear? If your lordship has no judgment, this little woman—this twopenny-worth of cheese*—will make you acquire some; and to the end of your days you'll remember Bettina the Venetian!

SCENE FOURTEEN

(Those present and COFFEE-BOY, with the coffee and the cakes.)

Boy. Here, sir.

Ottavio. Thanks. (*To Bettina.*) Have some coffee.

Bettina. I don't need any of your coffee. I, too, have a fancy for getting my own way.

Ottavio. Drink it to please me.

Bettina. That's just why I don't want to drink it. (*To the Boy.*) And you know, dirty little pig, if you come into this house again, I'll throw you down the stairs.

Boy. The Si'ora Catte sent me.

Bettina. Bad luck to her.

Ottavio. Drink the coffee.

Bettina. I won't.

Ottavio. Don't put me in a temper.

Bettina. You see what happens . . .

Ottavio. It's an insult.

* A person of small account.

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Those present and ARLECCHINO.)

Arlecchino. What's the row? What's all this? (*Sees the coffee and the biscuits.*)

Ottavio. Who are you?

Arlecchino. I'm the master of the house.

Ottavio. Si'ora Catte's husband?

Arlecchino. At your lordship's service.

Ottavio. Oh, my good man, let me embrace you. You're just in time to stand by me. Your sister-in-law here very uncivilly refuses to drink a cup of coffee which I took the liberty of having brought into your house.

Arlecchino. Our sister-in-law refuses to drink coffee? (*To Bettina.*) Come, no more fuss—drink the coffee.

Bettina. Oh, you good for nothing! I marvel at you. I won't drink anything.

Arlecchino. I'll put this right, if your lordship will entrust it to me.

Ottavio. Certainly.

Arlecchino (to Boy). Put the coffee there, the biscuits here. Observe and consider the prudence of man. My sister-in-law wants nothing, and when a woman wants nothing, obstinately, she wants nothing. Sending it away would be an affront to your lordship, so to taste the quality of the coffee and the biscuits I'll take some myself; and that that's the truth your lordship's here to see, and I leave it for your lordship to judge of the spirit in this bit of a man. (*Walks about eating the biscuits dipped in the coffee.*)

Ottavio (to Arlecchino). You've a good appetite, my friend.

Arlecchino. You see, now, everything's put straight. Have you any other little differences to settle with my sister-in-law, your lordship? (*Exit Coffee-Boy.*)

Ottavio (to Arlecchino). (I must speak with you alone.)

Arlecchino. Sister, will you have the delicacy to step out?

Bettina. I'll stay here at home.

Arlecchino. You don't want to go out? Suppose we do this.

(to *Ottavio*.) We'll find a way of adjusting this too. We'll go out ourselves.

Ottavio. As you like. We'll go out.

Bettina. (He diminishes by the quarter, like the moon.)

Ottavio. Bettina, good-bye.

Bettina (with disdain). 'Cellency.

Ottavio. You're still cross?

Bettina. (And he's still mad.)

Ottavio. Let's go, my friend.

Arlecchino. I follow your lordship.

Ottavio. Bettina, I leave you my heart.

Bettina. (Would to heaven he'd leave his skin too!)

Arlecchino. Well, if she's not mad—refusing coffee, refusing gifts—a poor girl refusing the delicate attentions of a nobleman! Eh, sister-in-law, if you behave like this, you'll go mouldy. (Exit.)

SCENE SIXTEEN

(BETTINA alone.)

Bettina. The misfortunes of us poor girls! If we're ugly, no one looks at us. If we are a bit good-looking we're persecuted by everybody. I don't pretend to be beautiful, but there's an I-don't-know-what about me that makes them all run after me. If I'd been willing I'd have been married some time ago, but these days there are very few chances of doing oneself well. Most of the young men are scapegraces. Cards, women, and the tavern are their finest virtues. It is better to eat bread and porridge with a man one likes than to eat chicken and capon with the wrong one. Yes, indeed, under a stair, if necessary, but with my sweet Pasqualino. (Exit.)

SCENE SEVENTEEN

Street.

(OTTAVIO meets PASQUALINO.)

Pasqualino. My father said your lordship was looking for me.

Ottavio. Oh, you're Cainello's son?

Pasqualino. Excellency, yes. At your service.

Ottavio. Good. I like you. You're a well-built youngster.

Pasqualino. Your lordship's all kindness.

Ottavio. Tell me, have you any employ?

Pasqualino. No, sir. Up to now my mother has sent me to school. I've learned to read and write, and to do a little counting; but my father wants me to be a boatman. The work doesn't suit me, so I recommend myself to your lordship's protection.

Ottavio. Can you keep books?

Pasqualino. I can learn.

Ottavio. Have you a clear handwriting?

Pasqualino. Nothing to boast of, but I can write print.

Ottavio. Well, I'll take you into my service.

Pasqualino. I thank your lordship for his bounty. I hope you will not have to complain of me.

Ottavio. I've been told you're in love? Is it true?

Pasqualino. (Good heavens!) To tell the truth, your lordship, I've courted a girl, and I love her dearly, and if I could, I'd marry her gladly.

Ottavio. Is she an honest girl, and respected?

Pasqualino. Like gold.

Ottavio. That's all that matters. Marry her and I'll give her my protection. You can bring her to live in my house.

Pasqualino. Oh, blessed heaven! Now I see that your lordship really is well disposed towards me.

Ottavio. Any dowry, this girl?

Pasqualino. An old man has promised her two hundred ducats.

Ottavio. It's not proper for an old man to give her a dowry. The two hundred ducats I'll give her myself.

Pasqualino. What! I feel my heart wrung with happiness.

Ottavio. Good-bye, Pasqualino. Keep well. Go find your bride and tell her to hurry on with the wedding. Youths are better mated than single. They attend to their work

better. (One way or another, Bettina will inevitably fall into my hands.) (Exit.)

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(PASQUALINO, then MENEGO.)

Pasqualino. What more could he do? Offer me a job, house me, marry me, give me a dowry! Could he do more? It's luck such as falls to few.

Menego. What's this cloak-wearing foppishness, sir? Are you tired yet of learning nothing? It seems to me that it's high time you put a sash round your middle, a red cap on your head, and went out oar in hand to earn your bread and butter.

Pasqualino. Eh, father, it's not going to be a sash and a red cap. You'll see me with a wig, with the scarlet coat and with a pen behind my ear.

Menego. Without my knowing? What's this new idea? Come, sir, tell me your tale.

Pasqualino. It's his lordship, our patron, who's given me this employ at his board.

Menego. And said nothing to me about it? What am I, I'd like to know? A nobody?

Pasqualino. He'll tell you when he sees you. Aren't you glad, sir, that your son has a job?

Menego. I'd be glad if I saw you on the poop of a boat, if I saw you at work, or in the house of some master, and following the calling of your fathers, that your grandfather followed, and your great grandfather, and all our family. Do you think, you featherbrain, that the calling of a boatman isn't dignified and civilized? You silly fool. We boatmen are a corps of men such as you find in no other country in the world. We serve, it's true, but ours is a noble service that doesn't soil our hands. We are the most intimate messengers of our patrons, and there's no danger of our telling anything we know. We're paid more than others, we maintain our houses with decency, we have

credit with the shopkeepers, we are patterns of fidelity, we are famous for our wit and for quickness of resource, and above all we are so faithful and devoted to our country that we'd shed our blood and defend her against the world if we heard a word said against our Venice that is Queen of the Sea.

Pasqualino. It's true, and well said. You praise your calling, but I can't follow it.

Menego. If you can't, I'll have you taught it. No one is born a master, and a man makes his way where he wills it.

Pasqualino. But I've something else to tell you, father.

Menego. Well, boy?

Pasqualino. My patron wishes to see me married.

Menego. You marry! How? On what? The master's protection? I've seen plenty of those who married on the dowry of the protector, but what happened? The master got tired of them, the dowry went up in smoke, the wife was ill used, and the husband got a sore head. Among us we don't countenance that sort of matrimony. Our wives are poor but honest; we eat polenta, but in our own homes; we work hard, but live in reputation; we wear the red cap, but without any one's being able to cast a shadow on us. Get some sense, and never let me hear again that you want to get married. Prepare yourself to go on the poop of a gondola, or to run up through the rigging to lash the flag to the top-gallant mast. (Exit.)

Pasqualino. Which means, in good Venetian, go out as a midy in the Navy; but if my master wishes it my father will have to be reconciled. He says protection only brings a sore head, and as to reputation . . . I know very well what he means; but I say to myself that an honourable wife can remain so in the midst of an armada, and I've read to that effect a Venetian poet who says:

‘ Man with woman naught can do
Unless the woman wants him to.’

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

A Street, with view of the Canal and of the House of Donna Pasqua. A boat full of garden stuff is seen arriving. In it are Donna Pasqua and two Boatmen from Palestrina; then Pasqualino comes from the house.

Donna Pasqua. Here we are, lads—here, just at this bank.
Ho—Menego!

Pasqualino. Why, mother, is it you?

Donna Pasqua. Yes, yes, son. Come here, and help me to land. (*She comes ashore.*)

Pasqualino. How is everything at Palestrina? All well?

Donna Pasqua. All well, son, all well. (*To the Boatmen, who are unloading the freight.*) Ohé! take this brown sugar ashore. (*To Pasqualino.*) What's your father doing?

Pasqualino. He'll be with the master. Oh, if you knew all the words we've had!

Donna Pasqua. Why, what's happened? When I'm away, you always have words.

Pasqualino. He wants me to be a boat-servant. I can't, I've no genius for it.

Donna Pasqua. (Poor child! It's easy to see that he's not of the boatman breed. If he knew whose son he really is—poor me!)

Pasqualino. The Marquis wants to give me a post, but father objects.

Donna Pasqua. Your father's mad. Leave it to me, son; I'll make him do as I say.

Pasqualino. And, mother—I want to get married.

Donna Pasqua. Poor lamb! Very well—marry away, if you want to. I did the same. Why, at fifteen I'd already a boy-child.

Pasqualino. But father's against it.

Donna Pasqua. He's mad—poor dear. Sons, when they get

to your age, must wed. Otherwise . . . but I'll say no more. Are you courting?

Pasqualino. Oh yes!

Donna Pasqua. Who?

Pasqualino. Bettina the laundress, a girl of my own class.

Donna Pasqua. (If you knew who you are, you wouldn't say that!) I know she's a good girl. I've seen her. She doesn't displease me.

Pasqualino. Oh, mother dear, how you do make up for everything! I'm going to tell my sweetheart that you approve. If you love me, make my father agree. It's true—a mother's love is greater than any love in the world.

SCENE TWO

(DONNA PASQUA alone.)

Donna Pasqua. It is all too true. And because of that, I did what I did; because of that, I brought up Pasqualino as my son, though he is not my child, and changed him in the cradle for my real son. (*A gondola is seen coming that obliges her boat to get out of the fairway.*) O la, O la, masters, have a care with that gondola; don't you sink my boat. (*To her Boatmen.*) Give him way there. These boatmen *are* so careless. Let 'em come and row at Palestina, we'd give 'em the flat of the oar!

SCENE THREE

(*The gondola draws up at the bank, and from it disembark Lelio—partly undressed from having rowed the gondola—and Tita the Gondolier. Donna Pasqua withdraws a little.*)

Lelio. Splendid, splendid! Ah, how I love to row! Eh, mate, come and find me again, and we'll have some fine outings.

Donna Pasqua. (It's some rich youth who's been out rowing for pleasure.)

Tita. You're still unskilled, sir, in this sort of rowing, but in time you'll get your hand in.

Lelio. At Leghorn there's a seaport, and one part of the city is called New Venice because of its canals. We row there—or, as you'd say, scull—but we handle the oar differently.

Tita. Eh, I know. They row with their backs to the bows.

Lelio. I was mad about it. I had an oar in my hand all day.

Tita. But you say you are Venetian, sir?

Lelio. Certainly. I am the son of Si'or Pantalone de Bisognosi.

Donna Pasqua. (What do I hear? Good gracious—all my blood quivers!)

Lelio. Tell me, which is the best inn in this town?

Tita. Why not find your father's house instead of an inn?

Lelio. Oh, I've a passion for inns. Besides, I don't want my father to see me till I've enjoyed Venice in full liberty for a few days.

Tita. But if your father sees you there'll be trouble.

Lelio. He doesn't know me—and I don't know him. I was a child when I went to Leghorn.

Tita. And how did you spend your time there?

Lelio. My father sent me there to learn commerce, but all I learned was rowing, fishing, drinking, swearing, and fisticuffs.

Donna Pasqua. (There you have him—his father over again, when his father was young.)

Lelio. Let's go and get a drink. I shall die of thirst—but listen, I don't want to pay you yet; we'll have a go at the cards first.

Tita. That's one of your merits that you hadn't mentioned, sir!

(*Lelio and Tita go out.*)

Donna Pasqua. See what I've come to! I cheated Si'or Pantalone of his child. I gave him mine instead, thinking it would be well brought up, thinking to see myself happy in it, and here he is—a rogue! I'm ashamed that he should be my son. If he were good I'd proclaim the truth, but as he is bad—let Si'or Pantalone enjoy him! I love Pasqualino as though he were my very son; and in truth, if I didn't make him, I gave him of my milk, and

it was he who consumed these breasts. But la, I must find my husband.

SCENE FOUR

The Street.

(Present, PANTALONE, then PASQUALINO.)

Pantalone. Nevertheless, I can't get that dear child out of my heart. I've tried with all my strength to give up loving her, and it's not possible. I've known her since she was a child. I've carried her in my arms when she was a wee mite. Her mother, poor thing, left her in my care, and I've helped her, and still help her, out of charity; but now I've fallen into a pitiable state. Dry straw near the fire must catch. Human nature awakes, and as often as not the opportunity makes the thief.

Pasqualino. My service, Si'or Pantalone.

Pantalone. How do you do, sir?

Pasqualino. You don't mind if I bother you a bit?

Pantalone. I know what you want to say. You're in love with Bettina. You want to marry her.

Pasqualino. You've guessed at once.

Pantalone. I'll dismiss the matter in two words. You can't have her.

Pasqualino. Why?

Pantalone. You are a lad who has no bread to put in his mouth.

Pasqualino. You know, sir, that I've now secured a post?

Pantalone. That's good. What is it, my boy? Do you go round selling hot cakes?

Pasqualino. I'm secretary to the Marquis of Ripa Verde, and I live in.

Pantalone. Excellent. He'll give you a good salary; you'll be able to have your own house and give your wife city ways.

Pasqualino. I shan't need to worry about anything. I'll take her to the master's house, and he'll do all that's necessary.

Pantalone. Better and better. Oh, what an honest cavalier!

Oh, what an honest boy! Oh, how clever! (Oh, what an ass! Oh, what a gullible ass, if he believes it!)

Pasqualino. You won't give her to me?

Pantalone. I won't give her to you.

Pasqualino. I'll tell his lordship that.

Pantalone. Tell it to the Count, too; I don't care.

Pasqualino. You'll see what he'll say!

Pantalone. You'll see what happens!

Pasqualino. She's not your daughter.

Pantalone. And she won't be your wife.

Pasqualino. Oh, but she will.

Pantalone. Oh, but she won't.

Pasqualino. Si'or Pantalone, beware of a desperate man.

Pantalone. Off with you, filthy rascal; men of your strength I can eat in salad. Even if I am old, there's blood in my stomach yet, and my legs are still strong enough to land a pair of kicks.

Pasqualino. Kicks—at me?

Pantalone. At you, you big scoundrel.

Pasqualino. Ouch! (*Menacing him, bites a finger.*)

Pantalone. I've a good mind to smash your teeth with this slipper. (*Tries to strike him with a slipper.*)

SCENE FIVE

(Those present and OTTAVIO.)

Ottavio. Hey, old friend, be more respectful of that young man—he belongs to me.

Pantalone. 'Old friend?' Who are you, sir? The Prince of Bothnia?

Ottavio. I am the Marquis of Ripa Verde.

Pantalone. And I'm Pantalone de Bisognosi.

Ottavio. Ah! Pantalone de Bisognosi. Aren't you the protector of that girl Bettina?

Pantalone. At your service.

Ottavio. Oh, then, you'd better know that the young woman is to be my secretary's wife.

Pasqualino (to *Pantalone*). That's me.

Pantalone. Is to be?

Ottavio. Is to be.

Pantalone. Marquis, go and do your dictating in your own marquisate.

Ottavio. Anyhow, the girl is satisfied, the youth wants her, and you mustn't prevent it, and you can't.

Pantalone. I can and must. I can prevent it because she has neither father nor mother. I've always looked after her honourably, like a gentleman, and I promised to see her safely married. But this poor blockhead hasn't realized the sort of figure he's to cut. A word to the wise is sufficient. Your lordship has understood me. Let it serve you as an example, and bear well in mind that *Pantalone de Bisognosi*, even if he is a merchant, knows the etiquette of gentlemen, that he wears a doublet and carries pistols, and that, if necessary, he can handle a sword as well. (*Exit.*)

SCENE SIX

(*OTTAVIO and PASQUALINO.*)

Ottavio. The senseless old madman! I'll have him beaten. Tell me, are you really in love with Bettina?

Pasqualino. Am I in love? I've eyes for no one but her.

Ottavio. You want her for wife?

Pasqualino. The sooner the better. To-night rather than to-morrow morning.

Ottavio. In that case, go straight to her, marry her, and take her to my house. Leave everything else to me.

Pasqualino. But you see . . .

Ottavio. Don't waste words, don't waste time.

Pasqualino. But . . . if Bettina's not willing . . .

Ottavio. What of it? Are you going to be dictated to by a woman? Women do what we tell them.

Pasqualino. But she's a maid . . .

Ottavio. Maid or no maid, all's one. Go along, marry her at once and bring her to the house, or I'll give you a thrashing.

Pasqualino. Well, I'll put a bold face on it.

Ottavio. Ye gods, the youth of *my* day didn't need stimulating!

Pasqualino. If the truth must be told, I'm in love with Bettina, but I *am* a bit of a coward. (Exit.)

SCENE SEVEN

(OTTAVIO, then LELIO.)

Ottavio. It's enough for me if he shows spirit in this affair. Later, I'll know how to turn his credulity to account, but I'm very much afraid of that old man! Mock me? Threaten me? And I to brook such an insult? Never—I'll avenge it. I'll show him what it is to be Marquis of Ripa Verde. As if a merchant could challenge a nobleman at the sword's point!

Lelio. What wine, what wine! They say that Venetian wine isn't good—but I say that it's better than the Chianti which we drink in Leghorn.

Ottavio. Here's a person of some bearing. . . . Good evening, sir. . . .

Lelio. Your Excellency's humble servant. (This must be some great noble.)

Ottavio. You're a foreigner?

Lelio. From Leghorn, at your service. (I must not be recognized.)

Ottavio. If I may ask, what calling do you follow?

Lelio. Vagabondage, sir, at your service.

Ottavio. A fine profession.

Lelio. The finest—I've always fancied it.

Ottavio. How do you exercise it?

Lelio. As I can.

Ottavio. Gambling?

Lelio. Sometimes.

Ottavio. Excuse the familiarity of my question, but do you need any money?

Lelio. (I don't *need* it—I simply must have it.) I tell you, sir, that in one month, what with gambling, public houses,

and other little diversions, I've dissipated a hundred guineas, my sword, my watch, my clothes, my linen, and I've nothing left except what you see.

Ottavio. I say, my friend, would you make any bones about giving a certain old party four blows with a stick?

Lelio. None at all.

Ottavio. Very well. If you decide to do it, I'll give you a pair of doubloons.

Lelio. (In my present state a pair of doubloons would save my life.) I don't do it for the money, you understand, sir, but rather than seem proud I'll take the money.

Ottavio. You're a lucky fellow, for here comes the old man. Thrash him, but don't kill him; and tell him that the Marquis of Ripa Verde presents his compliments.

Lelio. Very good. But then . . .

Ottavio. And then come to the café near by and I'll secretly give you the two doubloons. Old lunatic, you shall know who I am! (Exit.)

SCENE EIGHT

(LELIO and PANTALONE.)

Lelio. Can one do less to earn two doubloons? But here's our friend. Poor old man, I'm sorry for him.

Pantalone. (That son of mine doesn't come. I wonder what's delayed him! The post from Florence is in.)

Lelio. (If I fall on him without warning, I'm afraid he'll drop dead. I'd better do it with a little ceremony.)

Pantalone (observing Lelio). (What an ugly customer.)

Lelio. Your devoted servant, sir.

Pantalone. Sir, my respects.

Lelio. I'd like a couple of words with you.

Pantalone. At your service.

Lelio. I'm a gentleman, you understand, sir.

Pantalone. So I thought. (You don't look it.)

Lelio. You know the Marquis of Ripa Verde?

Pantalone. (Now I see what's up.) Yes, I've had a little disagreement with the Marquis.

Lelio. I'll tell you in confidence—I am ordered to give you a beating.

Pantalone. I say, couldn't you spare me the annoyance, and rather catch a couple of pieces of silver and go your way pleasantly?

Lelio. I've promised. I must keep my word. But I don't want to break any bones. Four blows only; you fall, and I go off.

Pantalone. I'd never endure such an insult!

Lelio. But who are you? Some great noble?

Pantalone. I'm Pantalone de Bisognosi.

Lelio. (Oh, the devil! My father!)

Pantalone. And while I have breath in my body I'll defend myself. (*Puts hand to pistols.*)

Lelio. (If he discovers who I am, he'll say I'm a fine son!)

Pantalone. (I fancy he's already frightened.) Off with you, scamp—get out of it! (*Threatening him.*)

Lelio. Forgive me, sir.

Pantalone. Get away, you rascal, or I'll rip the bowels out of your carcass.

Lelio. (I'd better run.) (*Exit.*)

SCENE NINE

(PANTALONE, then TITA, the Boatman.)

Pantalone. You run? I'll catch you, miserable wretch. (*Starts to pursue Lelio.*)

Tita (*stopping him*). Steady, Si'or Pantalone, whom are you after?

Pantalone. Let me go—let me go. I'll kill him.

Tita. What's he done to you?

Pantalone. Insulted me.

Tita. But you know who he is?

Pantalone. I? No, who is he?

Tita. That's Si'or Lelio, your son.

Pantalone. What? My son? That? It can't be!

Tita. He came this morning with the post from Florence, and he took a gondola at Poveggia, and so rowed to Venice.

Pantalone. And he didn't come to his father?

Tita. Poor boy, he wanted to have a little fun.

Pantalone. A little fun, playing the cut-throat? Beating his father? The scoundrel! Oh, the shame! Oh, the misfortune! My poor, mis-spent money! He learnt this fine trade in Leghorn! He'll go to the gallows—he'll go in irons, and I, his poor father, I shall have the grief of it. Go, find him, take him to the house. Tell him I'm not angry. Don't let him slip, friend; don't abandon me. Quick, hurry! Oh, what a son, what a son! (*Exit.*)

Tita. Son and father seem to me a couple of lunatics. I'll not have anything to do with them. The proverb says: 'Let him who has the itch do the scratching.'

SCENE TEN

Bettina's Room.

(*BETTINA, then PASQUALINO.*)

Bettina. I've listened with both ears and have heard no knocking. Pasqualino doesn't want me to sit in the loggia, and I'm afraid he'll pass and that I won't hear him. What a nuisance love is. Every night I dream of him. All my thoughts are with him. Without him I'm all on fire, and when he comes my heart turns somersaults. And I don't see the time approaching when he can come freely to the house. I hope Si'or Pantalone will give in. He says he won't, but he's so good; he'll do what I want him to.

Pasqualino. Bettina? You're alone?

Bettina. What? You here? Who said you might come into the house?

Pasqualino. Forgive me. I couldn't help it. There's no time to lose. You must come with me.

Bettina. Softly, softly, sir. What's all this? 'You must come with me?' I'm not your wife, you know.

Pasqualino. You'll be my wife if you come with me.

Bettina. These are new fashions. First go with the betrothed, and then wed? No, dear one, no!

Pasqualino. My father won't let me marry you. Si'or Pantalone won't let you marry me. We've everything against us.

Bettina. Then what do you expect to do? Take me round the world singing in the streets for our supper?

Pasqualino. I'll take you to the Marquis's house.

Bettina. Oh, fine! Most honourable! I'm sure the Marquis will be delighted.

Pasqualino. He told me so himself. He has quarrelled over me with Si'or Pantalone, and he takes an interest in me; so he's expecting me to bring my betrothed to his house.

Bettina. And I'm to go to his house?

Pasqualino. Yes—why not?

Bettina. He came to this house to make love to me. He wanted to give me a pair of earrings; he wanted to take my hand . . . and now you wish to carry me off to *his* house?

Pasqualino. What's this you say? The old villain! Now I understand the way he takes an interest in me. No, no, my girl, I don't take you there. Don't you think that for a moment. Fool that I was, I believed him; but you've opened my eyes, and my father knew what he was saying.

Bettina. Yes, indeed, but he might have saved himself the trouble.

Pasqualino. I'm afraid of losing you.

Bettina. There's no fear of that.

Pasqualino. Ah, Bettina, if you loved me!

Bettina. This heart is all yours.

Pasqualino. My love, now is the time for you to prove it. We are alone; no one sees us, no one hears us. Take your belongings and we'll run away together.

Bettina. I, run away? Bettina guilty of an act of that sort? *Pasqualino,* you don't know me yet. It's no use your saying let's run away and be married. If you've done wrong, it's one thing to remedy it by marrying. But it's not necessary to do wrong in order to be obliged to find the remedy. Even if I were your wife, everybody would

point a finger at me and say, 'That's she who ran away from home. Luckily, he married her.'

Pasqualino. But Si'or Pantalone will marry you to some one else.

Bettina. Oh, he can't do that.

Pasqualino. Father will send me away from Venice.

Bettina. You'll have to obey him.

Pasqualino. And Bettina?

Bettina. Bettina will wait.

Pasqualino. Ah, Bettina, we're both in tears, when we might both be happy.

Bettina. How?

Pasqualino. If you would come with me.

Bettina. I'm a respectable girl.

Pasqualino. I'll marry you.

Bettina. And then I'll go with you.

Pasqualino. Meantime?

Bettina. Meantime, we'll love each other.

Pasqualino. And if we die meantime?

Bettina. Better die and have saved our honour.

SCENE ELEVEN

(Those present and MENEGO CAINELLO.)

Menego. Oh-ho, my son, I've caught you here. What are you doing in this house?

(*Pasqualino stands mortified.*)

Bettina. Come, come, don't scold. After all, I'm a good girl and respected by every one.

Menego. Yes, yes—respected like the Padua boat, that's free to all. Get out of here, you disgrace of a son! Out you go at once, and I'll settle with you at home.

Pasqualino. I beg your forgiveness, father.

Menego. I'll forgive you soon with both fists. Run away now, Signor Good-for-nothing.

Pasqualino. (Poor Bettina! I feel my heart sinking.)

(*Exit, weeping.*)

SCENE TWELVE

(BETTINA and MENEGO.)

Menego (calling after *Pasqualino*). Cry, cry, you miserable barnacle!

Bettina. (I told him if he came into the house something terrible would happen.)

Menego. Excuse me, Si'ora, but what intention have you towards that boy?

Bettina. He's never been in the house before.

Menego. Go on!

Bettina. No—on my word.

Menego. Don't lie about it.

Bettina. Dear Messer Menego, I can't be silent. It's true, your son does court me. He loves me and I love him, and we're even betrothed, and it's just because of you that he came—in tears and despair—to beg me to run away with him. I wouldn't because I'm a respectable girl. And now you abuse me, scold me, and hold me in bad esteem. (*Weeps.*)

Menego. (Poor girl! I'm weeping, too, now.) If you wanted him for a husband I ought to have been told.

Bettina. Was it for me to tell you? We poor girls try to get married honourably. Be satisfied, Messer Menego, that you have to deal with a good girl, when another might have obliged you, by this time, to become a grandfather before being a father-in-law.

Menego. My dear child, I don't know what to say. I'm sorry for you, but you see my son's in no position to get married. He's still young and has no way of supporting a wife.

Bettina. I'm not in a hurry. I'll wait as long as you like.

Menego. (Her face is not ill-favoured, and her wit does not displease me. The father begins to row on his son's oar.*)

Bettina. (He seems to be softening a little.) Dear Messer Menego, have pity on me, don't let me die of despair. Permit me to kiss your hand.

* The father begins to be a rival of his son.

Menego. Willingly, child.

Bettina. Oh, don't squeeze so hard, you hurt me.

Menego. Are you so tender?

Bettina. No, no—don't touch my arms.

Menego. If you'll be good to me, I'll be good to you.

Bettina. How? What do you mean by that?

Menego. My son has neither money nor sense. Better care for me.

Bettina. Your son has more sense than you have, you silly old man. Go at once. Leave this house! It's a fine thing the way these evil-minded men lay eyes on a girl and at once get smitten, and if they touch her hand suddenly go out of their wits. The old ones are worse than the others. Listen to me—sooner or later Pasqualino will be my husband, and you I shall refuse to recognize as father-in-law, as parent or as kin.

Menego. No, no, signora, you mustn't say such things. I expected to find plain sailing and to idle along this pleasant channel, but I see the wind has risen and the boat is making rough weather of it, and as I don't like to go against the current, I'll give you good-day. Still, don't you think that I'm going to disappear, or that I'll shut myself up in my cabin and sleep. I'll tie up to a pole and lay my boat across the canal, so that if I can't row it, my lady, my son won't be able to row it either. (*Exit.*)

SCENE THIRTEEN

(*BETTINA* alone.)

Bettina. No one shall row through this house. Here's a canal that they don't know—and if any one tries, he'll catch it! I'll throw him out when he's least expecting it.

SCENE FOURTEEN

(*BETTINA, CATTE, and PASQUALINO.*)

Catte (*to Pasqualino*). Poor boy! Come here, my son!

Bettina. Oh, poor me! What's all this? His father's just gone. You didn't meet him?

Catte. Eh, yes, indeed, I saw him. I was just coming home and met Pasqualino starting away. He was crying so, I felt sorry for him and hid him in the shop. His father's gone, and I went back and brought him up.

Bettina. Quick, quick! make him go away.

Pasqualino. You want to make me die.

Bettina. But what can I do? Can't you hear that I'm crying?

Catte. You're mad, that's what you are. Pasqualino, give her the token, and to-morrow morning you can go and be married.

Pasqualino. Bettina, if I give it you, will you take the token?

Bettina. The token?

Pasqualino. Yes. I'll give you this turquoise.

Bettina. That turquoise?

Catte. Come, come, don't pretend to be bashful, you that want this more than he does.

Pasqualino. Give me your hand.

Bettina. Not I.

Pasqualino. How do you expect me to put on the ring?

Bettina. I'll put it on myself, from where I am.

Catte. Come here, come here. Like this . . . (*helps Pasqualino to place the ring on Bettina's finger.*)

Pasqualino. Oh, dearest! (*presses her hand.*)

Bettina. Away, you villain!

Pasqualino. But we're plighted.

Bettina. But we're not wedded.

Catte. Bless me, have we a betrothal here and no bit of celebration? We've a little liberty before us. We might have a bit of fun. Say, Pasqualino, have you any money?

Pasqualino. I've nothing but a couple of silver ducats; I'll give you one. Here, take it!

Catte. Even that's something. I'll get us a little muscat and a few biscuits. Give it here and leave it to me.

Pasqualino. At any rate, I bear the expense.

Bettina. (There! She's already eaten the ducat.)

Pasqualino. And I? I get nothing out of the ducat?

Catte. Oh, you dear booby! Yes, son, everything; you are the master of the house. Cheers for the betrothed, cheers for the betrothed!

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Those present and ARLECCHINO.)

Arlecchino. Bravo! Three cheers for the betrothed!

Catte. Sh! No one must know about it.

Arlecchino. Are we going to eat?

Catte. It has all been done upside down, and for the present we can't do anything.

Arlecchino (to Pasqualino). And they come into my house to do things upside down? Nothing to eat? I'm going to find your father. I'm going to find Si'or Pantalone. I'm going to call the whole community, so that everybody shall know that you, you good-for-nothing, came to my house to marry, without bringing anything to eat.

Bettina. Oh, what a scoundrel! Do use a little sense!

Arlecchino. Sense? Where there's no food there's no sense; that holds.

Pasqualino. You'll be our ruin.

Arlecchino. That's nothing to me. Ho, la! folks, know that in my house . . . (goes towards the door).

Bettina (to Arlecchino). Hush!

Catte. Hush!

Arlecchino. In my house there's a . . . (reaches the door).

Pasqualino. Hush, for pity's sake!

Arlecchino. There's a betrothal and no feast.

Bettina. Hush!

Catte. Hush!

Arlecchino. He's marrying my sister-in-law. It's Pasqua . . .

Pasqualino. Here, take this ducat, and hush.

Arlecchino. Hush!

Bettina. Are you satisfied?

Arlecchino. Hush!

Catte. You'll not make any more racket?

Arlecchino. Hush!

Pasqualino. Are you satisfied to have me stay here?

Arlecchino. Hush, hush, hush! You're master, make yourself at home and all's pretty again. *(Exit.)*

Catte (to Pasqualino). And now that's adjusted, also.

Pasqualino. Yes, but now I've not a penny left.

Catte. What does it matter? You'll make some.

Pasqualino (to Catte). Now, since Arlecchino's taken away that ducat, you'd do me a service if you gave me back the one I gave you.

Catte (pretending to be called away by a neighbour). Si'ora, calling me? Coming, coming. You stay here, son. I'll be back in a minute. *(You'll not get this back from me.)*

SCENE SIXTEEN

(BETTINA and PASQUALINO.)

Pasqualino. And even now you send me away?

Bettina. Don't you know that?

Pasqualino. But haven't I given you the token?

Bettina. Well?

Pasqualino. Well, can't I stay with my betrothed?

Bettina. Si'or, yes, you could, if we weren't alone, if my sister were here.

Pasqualino. But no one's as particular as all that!

Bettina. Si'or, yes, they are. I remember my mother, poor darling, who used to say to me: 'Listen, if you get married, I don't want any long betrothals; I don't want to go out of my mind standing guard over you.'

SCENE SEVENTEEN

(Those present and CATTE.)

Catte. Children, children, poor me! Si'or Pantalone's here.

Bettina (to Pasqualino). Oh, I told you so. You wouldn't leave.

Pasqualino. Where is he?

Bettina. I saw him. He's coming by gondola. He's landing this minute at the dock.

Pasqualino. What shall I do now?

Catte. Jump from the balcony.

Bettina. Of course, poor lamb! You would kill him for me.

Catte. Here he is.

(Pasqualino runs to the window and leaps from it.)

Bettina. Oh, poor me! *(runs to the window.)*

Catte. Let him go. Men are never lacking.

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(Those present and PANTALONE.)

Pantalone. Child, where are you?

Catte. Here we are, Si'or Pantalone.

Pantalone. What's Bettina doing at the balcony?

Catte. Looking at the weather.

Pantalone. So absorbed on the balcony? There must be something worth seeing *(goes towards the window)*.

Catte (to Bettina in an undertone). *(Let him go.)*

Bettina (to Catte). *(The cloak.)*

Catte (to Bettina). *(What cloak?)*

Bettina. *(Pasqualino has left his cloak.)*

Catte. *(The lunatic!)*

Bettina. Well, have you seen?

Pantalone. Yes, si'ora. Whose cloak is this? *(brings it with him)*.

Catte. How odd! It's my husband's.

Pantalone. I've never seen it before.

Catte. He bought it the other day; it was a bit wet with spray, and so I put it in the sun.

Pantalone. Come, now. You come here, Si'ora Bettina. I've something to say to you.

Bettina. Speak, sir.

Pantalone. Your dear Si'or Pasqualino has been to see me, asking for your hand.

Bettina. Well, sir?

Pantalone (sees the ring on *Bettina's* finger). Oh-ho. What's this? Rings, madam, rings?

Bettina. (Oh, poor me!)

Pantalone. May I see that fine turquoise?

Catte. Isn't it, Si'or *Pantalone*? Isn't it a beauty?

Pantalone. Is it a gift? A token?

Bettina. Listen to him. A token! You hear what he says?

Catte. Don't you know it, si'or? It's my turquoise. My husband got it for me.

Pantalone. Your husband must have assassinated somebody, then. He never works.

Catte. Don't you know? He has inherited from his people in Bergamo.

Pantalone. Very well. And why is your sister *Bettina* wearing it?

Catte. Because my hand's grown too fat, and it doesn't fit me any more.

Bettina. (I don't know where she finds the way to invent the things she says.)

Catte. Now I want to sell it. And as it fits my sister so well, don't you think, Si'or *Pantalone*, you ought to make *Bettina* a gift of it?

Pantalone (to *Bettina*). Would you like to keep it?

Bettina. Oh yes, sir.

Pantalone (to *Catte*). How much do you want for it?

Catte. Oh, I bought it when I was betrothed, from *Orese de la Fortuna*, who was going to *Castello*, and I gave him twenty-eight lira, and my godfather *Tita* was present, and he lent me the fifty cents. which I lacked. I could have got a guinea for it ten times from the breadwoman. You can ask her if it isn't the truth; but as it's for my sister, for a guinea if you like, you may give it to her.

Pantalone. Take it. Here's a guinea, and keep the turquoise for my sake.

Bettina. Thank you, Si'or *Pantalone*.

Catte. Listen, sister, you must love the one who gave you this turquoise.

Bettina. Eh, of course I love him.

Catte. It might be that one day he would become your husband.

Bettina. I hope so.

Pantalone. What? Do you say that from the heart?

Bettina. Go on, go on, Si'or Pantalone. Don't encourage hopes so soon.

Pantalone. Enough. We'll discuss that later. Do you know that I've had a quarrel with that Marquis I told you about? He swore that by love or by force he would get you away, and he has paid men to come here to-night and carry you off. I've been warned by one of his men who knows me and loves me.

Bettina. Oh, poor me! What do I hear?

Pantalone. So I've resolved that you and your sister shall get into a boat with me, and we'll go to your aunt the cobbler's wife. You'll stay there to-morrow. No one will know anything about it, and you will be safer.

Bettina. But Si'or Pantalone . . .

Catte. He's right, he's right. He speaks well. No need to stop and discuss. Let's go to our aunt's. (Don't you worry. I'll tell Pasqualino.) (*To Bettina in undertone.*) We'll have more liberty.

Pantalone. If you don't, you'll be ruined, and you'll ruin me as well.

Bettina. I'll go and dress.

Pantalone. I'll go in the meantime and bring the boat round.

Bettina. (Heaven help me. I've no wish to fall from the frying-pan into the fire. Dear Pasqualino, where are you, my heart? I don't want to lose you. I do hope you haven't been hurt.) (*Exit.*)

Catte. Bettina loves you well, you know, Si'or Pantalone.

Pantalone. Do you mean that, my girl?

Catte. Yes—I do, truly.

Pantalone. Do you think that in time . . .

Catte. Why not? Leave it to me. Girls have to have presents given them. In that, you know, we are all alike. Gifts make givers. (Exit.)

Pantalone. Alas! it's too true. In this world every one acts from self-interest, and women in particular are worse than leeches. There's no contenting them ever. I'll spend willingly, provided that Bettina keeps straight, with the hope that one day she'll say me 'Yes.' Who knows? Women have certain moments, certain aspects of the stars when they can't say 'No,' even if they want to. It's all in reading the signs. But I, who am an old wolf, will go feeling my way, and some fine day when she's in a softened mood I'll just pop on her finger the wedding-ring. (Exit.)

SCENE NINETEEN

The Street.

(OTTAVIO and BRIGHELLA.)

Brighella. Dear Si'or Master, I don't know what to say. Bettina is obstinate. In a word, you simply can't get into her house.

Ottavio. If I can't win by cunning, I'll win by force. I'll rape her.

Brighella. That's the easiest method of getting your own way. As your Excellency commanded, I have found the men, and they're in the boat waiting. It will soon be dark. If your Excellency wishes, let us go, and make our preparations cleverly so she cannot escape.

Ottavio. For a matter like this I'd have willingly taken along a certain lad from Leghorn. When it comes to fighting, he's worth his weight in gold. He gave a good drubbing to that old fire-eating Pantalone.

Brighella. The one who was speaking in the café with your Excellency?

Ottavio. Exactly. The one to whom I gave the two doubloons.

Brighella. Leave it to me, sir. If I see him, he'll come in the boat. (Exit.)

SCENE TWENTY

(OTTAVIO, then BEATRICE and TITA the Boatman.)

Ottavio. When she's once in my hands she'll consent.

Beatrice. No! I can't bear the motion of the water. I feel myself getting sick, and I'd rather go afoot.

Tita. Now, Excellency, I must leave you while I tie up the boat at the other bank so as not to obstruct the fairway.

Beatrice. Make haste. I don't want to be left here alone.

(*Tita goes.*)

Ottavio. (Here's my precious jewel of a wife.)

Beatrice. (Here's my masterpiece of a husband.)

Ottavio. A fine figure you cut, madam, going about Venice on foot.

Beatrice. You know very well the water makes me sick. I couldn't endure it any longer. If I hadn't come ashore I'd have died.

Ottavio. (Oh, if you'd only been out at sea, you couldn't have come ashore!)

Tita (returned). Here I am, Excellency, at your orders.

Beatrice (to Ottavio). Signor, will you favour me with your company?

Ottavio. Signora, no!

Beatrice. Your lordship is most disobliging.

Ottavio. Your ladyship is most gracious.

Beatrice. Then I shall have to go home on foot, alone, with the boatman.

Ottavio. Where's the Count? Where are your servants?

Beatrice. Oh, I know why you refuse to come with me. You've ill deeds afoot.

Ottavio. I? Fancy! I've enough to do attending to the affairs of the house.

Beatrice. Oh yes, the affairs of the house. I know all, Signor Marquis. If I catch that dear Bettina of yours I'll give her something to remember.

Ottavio. Come, madam, attend to your own affairs, and I'll attend to mine.

Beatrice. Enough. I know what I'll do.

Ottavio. Madam, the evening is drawing in. Go home.

The night air's not good for you.

Beatrice. To-night we're going to the Comedy.

Ottavio. Pleasant journey.

Beatrice. You're also expected.

Ottavio. Let them expect.

Beatrice. You won't go?

Ottavio. Signora, no!

Beatrice. My lord, I've lost ten guineas.

Ottavio. May you lose your head.

Beatrice. And I lost them on my word.

Ottavio. Sorry.

Beatrice. I must pay them.

Ottavio. Pay them.

Beatrice. You'll have to give me them.

Ottavio. Your most humble servant. (*Exit.*)

Beatrice. A pretty way to treat your wife. When husbands behave as badly as this, what can the women do? Mayn't a lady of my standing lose ten guineas? I'll lose a hundred, two hundred, and if my husband values the honour of his house he'll have to pay them. He spends—I want to spend, too. He throws money away—I want to throw money away, too. And if the house falls, I want to be able to say that I had my fair share. (*Exit with Boatman.*)

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

View of the Canal, with Tita's gondola tied up to the opposite bank.

Two gondolas arrive at the same moment from opposite directions, one sculled by Menego and the other by Nanne, the Boatman; they meet. The canal, owing to Tita's moored boat, is now too narrow for them to pass abreast, and they stop. Each insists that the other shall give way by dropping back.

Nanne. Back water yourself. I have the right of way.

Menego. So've I! Back water a couple of strokes, and then we may all pass.

Nanne. Me back water? Drop back yourself; you're going with the stream.

Menego. I've a load aboard, mate. I can't.

Nanne. I don't move, either. I've three in the boat.

Menego. Three? I've five.

Nanne. I don't care if you've six—it's up to you to give me right o' way.

Menego. Who says it's up to me? Your head's not screwed on properly. Can't you see? If I fall back I've more than fifty boats astern. I'd have to go back to the end of the canal. You've only three behind you. Give me way.

Nanne. Come, Master Menego, don't stand there arguing.

Menego. You'd teach me, would you? Me, that these twenty years have been running regattas?

Nanne. You *may* row in regattas, but I know my business, and I tell you it's up to you to fall astern.

Menego. Oh, get out of the way and shut up.

Nanne. If you weren't older than I am, I'd shut *you* up with my oar.

Menego. With a mug like that?

Nanne. Yes. With a mug like this!

Menego. Get out. Go and row a barge.

Nanne. Get out yourself. Go and row in the galleys.

Menego. Are you from Caverzere or Palestrina? Goose!

Nanne. What d'you bet I don't throw your cap overboard?

Menego. Listen. I've the master aboard. I have to be careful, and besides . . .

Nanne. So've I the master aboard, and I want to move on.

Menego. D'you think I don't know you? You're only a public ferry.

Nanne. What of that? Who spends his money is master.

Menego. Hey! Are you going to let me pass?

Nanne. No. I stay here till to-morrow.

Menego. Well, I don't budge either.

Nanne. Sooner sink than drop back.

Menego. Sooner go to pieces than go astern.

Nanne. Back out, you poor son of a deuce.

Menego. Back water yourself, you seed of a snail.

Nanne. I'm nailed here. You'll see.

Menego. And there's my oar—fast! (*plunges his oar in the ooze of the canal bed*).

Nanne (*bending down to speak to persons in his gondola*). Your orders, you say, sir? I must fall back? Not if you gave me ten guineas, sir. If you wish to go ashore, sir, go ashore, but I don't budge from here.

Menego (*also bending down to speak with those he has in his gondola*). But, your Excellency, my reputation's at stake. I can't let him to get the better of me with that old tub of his.

Nanne. What's that about an old tub, old squaretoes?

Menego. What d'you bet I don't pitch your rowlock overboard?

Nanne (*again speaking with passengers in his gondola*). As I said, sir, if you want to go ashore, go ashore. It's all one to me. I have to settle with this regatta-gentleman.

Menego (*also speaking again with his passengers*). Your lordship, yes! It would be better if your lordship went ashore. I won't back water, not if it costs me my daily bread.

Nanne. Look, now. Because of you my passengers are disembarking. You'll pay me for this.

Menego. I'm the man to give you full satisfaction.

Nanne. I shall laugh when I've chucked you overboard.

Menego. I'm not afraid of you nor of ten of your strength.

Nanne. O-ha! O-ha!

Menego. Ass!

Nanne. Pig!

Menego. Fool!

SCENE TWENTY-TWO

(Those present, and PANTALONE, CATTE, and BETTINA, both the latter veiled in their mantles, disembark from NANNE'S Gondola.)

Pantalone. Just look—how disgraceful! Those two, rather than back water, oblige their passengers to land.

Bettina. Oh, how frightened I am of the darkness!

Catte. And I'm all atremble, too. Never again do I go in a boat. Si'or Pantalone, you wouldn't want me to get an illness from the excitement; let's go and drink twopenny-worth of cheer.

Pantalone. Why not? Willingly.

Menego. Excellency, it's best you disembark, too. That conceited numskull won't give me right of way.

Nanne. Keep your breath to cool your porridge.

SCENE TWENTY-THREE

(Those present, OTTAVIO, THE THREE MEN, and LELIO, who all disembark from MENEGO'S gondola.)

Ottavio. What do I see? Bettina here with her sister? Friends, that is the one we are looking for. Take these ladies and conduct them you know where.

(*The men seize the two women by the arms.*)

Bettina. Help, help!

Catte. Oh, mercy!

(*They are led away by the men and the Marquis.*)

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR

(PANTALONE, LELIO, and the TWO GONDOLIERS.)

Pantalone. People, help! stop them!

Lelio. (That's my father.)

Pantalone. You here? You child of disgrace. You deserve to be sent to the gallows, but come here, help me in this affair, and I'll forgive you everything.

Lelio. Sir, who are you that speak so intimately?

Pantalone. Don't you know me, your father?

Lelio. You my father? What the devil are you saying, sir? I'm from Tuscany, and you're Venetian. How can you be my father?

Pantalone. Aren't you Lelio Bisognosi?

Lelio. What! I'm Aristobolo Maccaleppi.

Pantalone. But yesterday I was told . . . never mind. It's probably untrue. . . . (I thought it was impossible he should want to beat his own father.)

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE

(Those present and TITA, the Boatman.)

Tita. Oh, Si'or Lelio, you're just the man I was looking for . . .

Lelio. Hush, you . . .

Tita. Si'or Pantalone, have you made peace with your son?

Lelio. (Curse him!)

Pantalone. With which son?

Tita. With this Si'or Lelio.

Pantalone. This is Lelio?

Tita. Oh, rather! That's he.

Lelio. The furies take you, boatman of the devil. (*Exit.*)

Pantalone. Oh, the scamp! You lied to me? I'll have you yet, you miserable wretch. And Bettina? Poor dove. She's in the clutches of the falcon. And that infamous son of mine? Poor father! Poor Pantalone! Between love and rage I feel my heart is splitting. (*Exit.*)

SCENE TWENTY-SIX

(THE THREE GONDOLIERS.)

Nanne (to Menego). Come along, now. Who's going to back water?

Menego. Backwater yourself. It's you who're going to—you know me.

Nanne. Would you like to bet I don't split your pate with this oar?

Menego. Come amidships if you want me to give you a taste.

Nanne. Ashore, if you're a man.

Tita. Come, mates, stop this. Let me get over to my boat, and I'll make way for you. Why didn't you untie her?
(*Goes to his boat over the decks of the other two.*)

Menego (to Tita). I'm surprised you should suggest such a thing. I know the customs. Men's boats aren't untied and set adrift like that.

Tita. Here, move along, and may heaven bless you. (*Goes off with his gondola.*)

Nanne. Take your way—now that brave lad has given me boat room; and anyhow, a cheer for Cochieto, for you were going home headless. (*Moves off with his gondola.*)

Menego. I was going to cut you up in bits, you know, and the largest piece would have been an ear. (*Also moves off with his gondola.*)

Nanne. Braggart! (*Draws away with his gondola.*)

Menego. Captain Coviello! (*Draws away with his gondola.*)

Nanne. Ah—stuck up!

Menego. Ah—idiot!

(*Exchanging abuses, they go off with their gondolas.*)

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

A Room in the House of the Marquis, with a small table and candles.

(Present, LADY BEATRICE and SCANNA, a Usurer.)

Beatrice. This way, Signor Scanna. Come into this room. We can talk more at our ease here.

Scanna. As your ladyship commands.

Beatrice. I need twenty guineas. I lost them at cards on the pledge of my word. My husband won't give them to me, and as I'm a woman of honour I shall have to pay them somehow or other.

Scanna. Quite so. Very proper. And how does your ladyship think of finding those twenty guineas?

Beatrice. By pawning something.

Scanna. Your ladyship has some jewels?

Beatrice. My personal jewellery.

Scanna. On that we can raise twenty guineas.

Beatrice. And in the meantime must I go without them?

Scanna. If you want the money.

Beatrice. Here—take these. You can have my earrings.
(And false pearls *are* being worn now.)

Scanna. Ah—the earrings will not be enough. These—worth twenty ducats?

Beatrice. The devil take you! Why, they are worth a hundred crowns.

Scanna. Ah, but diamonds are worth something to-day and nothing to-morrow.

Beatrice. What are we to do then?

Scanna. Give me that ornament as well.

Beatrice. What! Give you the value of a hundred doubloons for twenty guineas?

Scanna. If your ladyship wants more I will give it.

Beatrice. But it's just twenty guineas I want.

Scanna. Those twenty you'll have to pay out. Don't you want something that will help to recoup your losses?

Beatrice. Very well—make it thirty. But what are you going to ask by way of usury?

Scanna. Excuse me, I don't take usury.

Beatrice. So you'll . . .

Scanna. Your ladyship shall do like others: eightpence a ducat for the first month and a penny on each ducat every month for a year, with the understanding that if the jewels are not redeemed within a year they shall be forfeited.

Beatrice. And suppose I redeem them in three or four days?

Scanna. Then you'll just pay the eightpence a ducat for the first month.

Beatrice. And that's not usury?

Scanna. Oh, no—business!

Beatrice. (Those wretched cards!)

Scanna. If you want the money I'll give it at once.

Beatrice. If you please.

Scanna. Here, then—guinea-pieces all of one weight. (At least six grains.)

Beatrice. I must trust you for that.

Scanna. One, two, three, four . . .

SCENE TWO

(Those present and OTTAVIO.)

Ottavio. My wife with a Jew? We must look into this.

Scanna. Five, six, seven, eight . . .

Ottavio (*looking on unobserved*). Good. They're guineas.

Scanna. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve . . .

Ottavio. Signora—my congratulations!

Beatrice. (Plague take you! You're just in time.)

Ottavio. Guineas by the handful? Excellent.

Beatrice. Well, if the husband has no thrift, the wife must use her brains.

Ottavio. Doing a good stroke of business?

Beatrice. I'm pawning my jewels.

Ottavio. Good—and for how much, if I may ask?

Beatrice. I shall know when I come to count up.

Ottavio. Don't you know now?

Beatrice. No.

Ottavio (to Scanna). You have more sense than she, sir, so tell me the truth—how much are you giving her?

Scanna. Thirty guineas.

Ottavio. Good. And she gives you the jewels as security?

Scanna. Yes, your Excellency.

Ottavio. Good. And what is your rate of usury?

Scanna. That word usury—I can't abide it. I've bargained for eightpence a ducat the first month and a penny each month after for a year.

Ottavio. Yes—a bargain I've met with before! In a year one pays thirty per cent. in usury, and the amount on the first month is at a rate of a hundred and fifty per cent. for the year. Signora Marquise, he drives a good bargain—for himself.

Beatrice. Necessity forces me . . .

Ottavio. And it all comes of gambling.

Beatrice. But what can I do? Honour obliges me to pay.

Ottavio. It's idiotic to pay usury like this.

Scanna. A pest on that word usury!

Beatrice. Well, what am I to do?

Ottavio. I should say—sell them outright.

Beatrice. And then?

Ottavio. Then we'll buy others.

Beatrice. I'm afraid I should never see them again.

Ottavio. Come, you know that I've put my palace up for sale. I'll buy you jewels much finer than these.

Beatrice. But to sell them would take time.

Scanna. If you wish, I'll buy them—and give you the money at once. How much do you want?

Ottavio. We must have them valued.

Beatrice. There's no time to lose.

Scanna. What about thirty guineas as an advance?

Beatrice. Give me forty.

Scanna (to Ottavio). Shall I?

Ottavio. Yes—satisfy her.

Scanna. Here, then. I've given your ladyship twelve already, so these twenty-eight make forty.

Ottavio. And now let's go and have the jewels valued.

Beatrice. And who'll get what's over?

Ottavio. It won't be much—eh, Signor Scanna?

Scanna. Indeed, very little. Your ladyship—my respects!
(What a happy marriage!) (Exit.)

Ottavio. (I came in the nick of time. The residue won't be so mighty small. It'll come in handy for me—to dry Bettina's tears.) (Exit.)

Beatrice. Who knows? With twenty-two guineas I may recoup my fortunes. And if the Marquis doesn't buy back the jewels for me he'll be sorry! Who's that crying? Surely that voice comes from one of our rooms? It sounds like a woman. It'll be a fine thing if my husband . . . and it wouldn't be the first time, either. I must find out. If the door's bolted I'll have it broken in. Right under my eyes? In my own house? If it's a woman, she'll repent of it! (Exit.)

SCENE THREE

*Another Room in the House of the Marquis, with two doors.
A table and a candle.*

(BETTINA alone.)

Bettina. Poor me! Whatever will become of me? Where am I? Who was it brought me here? Where can my sister be? What will Si'or Pantalone say? And my Pasqualino—what will *he* say? If only he knew where I am, he'd throw himself into the fire for me, I know he would. And who was he—that dog, that assassin who played me this scoundrelly trick? I'm afraid it was that Marquis. But isn't there *any one* in this house? Ho—people! Help! Let me out! (*A door is heard being forced.*) What's that? Some one's breaking the door! Help! Mercy! I'm done for!

SCENE FOUR

(BETTINA and LADY BEATRICE.)

Beatrice. Who are you?

Bettina. A poor girl.

Beatrice. What are you doing here?

Bettina. Nothing.

Beatrice. Who brought you here?

Bettina. I don't know.

Beatrice. Whom are you expecting?

Bettina. No one.

Beatrice. Then who the devil are you?

Bettina. My name is Bettina, and I am . . .

Beatrice. You needn't go on. I know you—my noble husband's ladylove!

Bettina. Who is your husband? I don't know him.

Beatrice. My dear! Don't know him? The Marquis of Ripa Verde.

Bettina. Is this *his* house?

Beatrice. It is, indeed.

Bettina. Now I understand everything. It's he who brought me here. Then you are the wife of this Marquis?

Beatrice. Yes. What of it?

Bettina. Dear Excellency, don't leave me, I implore you. I'm a respectable girl. Your ladyship's husband has done everything possible to get me into his power, and as he couldn't succeed by fair means he has had me carried off.

Beatrice. Can I really believe what you say?

Bettina. On my honour as a good girl, I swear it's true—and if your ladyship still doubts me, see for yourself.

Beatrice. If that's the truth I pledge myself to protect and help you.

Bettina. Your ladyship knows that I am betrothed to a young man with whom you are acquainted?

Beatrice. Who is it?

Bettina. Pasqualino, son of your ladyship's boatman.

Beatrice. He loves you?

Bettina. Indeed he does—but all the world's against it.

Beatrice. Leave it to me. I promise to make you happy.

For the present I have to go out; and as I've no mind to leave you alone here you will accompany me.

Bettina. I'll do whatever your ladyship says.

Beatrice. You will go with me to the play.

Bettina. Oh, but excuse me—I've never been. Girls don't go to the theatre.

Beatrice. Girls mustn't go to the scandalous plays, but they can go to the good plays, the honest plays.

Bettina. I'll do what your ladyship commands. But the Marquis . . . ?

Beatrice. My husband will see that you are no longer here, and then he'll have *me* to deal with!

Bettina. And poor Pasqualino!

Beatrice. I'll send his father to hunt him out . . .

Bettina. Oh, and that man, too! If your ladyship knew how against me he is!

Beatrice. He won't know why I want him.

Bettina. God bless your ladyship! How kind you are, how charitable!

Beatrice. Are you hungry? Would you like something to eat?

Bettina. Oh no, thank you. The sooner we leave, the better.

Beatrice. Very well, let's go. I hear the other door opening!

Bettina. It was through that they pushed me in here.

Beatrice. It's my husband—not a doubt of it.

Bettina. We're in a fine fix now. For the love of heaven, let's escape!

Beatrice. No—we'll do better than that.

Bettina. He's coming!

Beatrice. Blow out the light. Do whatever I tell you, and don't hesitate for an instant. (*They blow out the light.*)

Bettina. I'm terrified!

SCENE FIVE

(Those present, and OTTAVIO from the other side of the room.)

Ottavio (*seeking for her in the dark*). Bettina, Bettina!

Beatrice (softly). Answer him.

Bettina. Your Excellency . . .

Ottavio. Why have you put out the light?

Bettina (prompted by *Beatrice*). I blew it out because I was bashful.

Ottavio. Where are you, where are you?

Bettina (as before). Here.

Ottavio. Give me your little hand. (*Bettina* would refuse; and *Beatrice* puts out her own hand.) Dear little hand! Do you love me?

Bettina (as before). Oh yes, sir.

Ottavio. Were you angry because I brought you here?

Bettina (as before). No, sir.

Ottavio. Ah, my dear little *Bettina*—that's better!

Bettina (as before). Dear Excellency, I am tired of staying in the dark. I wish you would go for another candle.

Ottavio. I'll call some one.

Bettina (as before). No—not that! I don't want any one to see me. If your lordship himself would just go and . . .

Ottavio. Very well. I'll go now. (How easily she has submitted! That's always the way with women—one must use violence.)

Bettina. He's gone.

Beatrice. Come with me—quick. Go into this other room and await me.

Bettina. If I don't die now I shall never die. (*She goes into the next room.*)

SCENE SIX

(*BEATRICE*, then *OTTAVIO* with a candle.)

Beatrice. What a charming husband! So he'd shut up his ladylove in his house. But here he comes with the candle.

Ottavio. Well, here I am . . . (*he sees Beatrice*).

Beatrice. What do you want, sir?

Ottavio (looking round the room). Oh, nothing.

Beatrice. (He seems somewhat agitated!)

Ottavio. (How the devil did *she* get here?)

Beatrice. Have you lost anything?

Ottavio. (I'm sure I spoke to Bettina.) Yes, ma'am, I *have* lost something.

Beatrice. What?

Ottavio. A jewel.

Beatrice. You've lost a jewel, and I've found it. It's in my possession. Come, sir—think better of all this. Jewels of that sort shouldn't be brought to the house. A wife is entitled to respect, and ought not to be set such a bad example. (*She goes into the other room and bolts the door.*)

Ottavio. I'm staggered. How could she know about it? How did she get in? In the dark—and just here—I'm positive it was Bettina I spoke with. And now, where is she gone to? Ah! the Marquise has stolen her away from me—but before she can be spirited out of the house I'll find her again. I'm determined to carry my point, though the house should fall. . . . (*Exit.*)

SCENE SEVEN

A Street. The same night.

(Present, CATTE in a shawl.)

Catte. Where am I? Where am I going? In this pitch darkness I don't even recognize the streets. Oh, there are the boats' lanterns hanging out, and the moon will rise soon. Meanwhile, I must endure it. Where *can* my poor sister be? Who carried her off? It simply must have been the Marquis. Why on earth did he scare her to death? Why couldn't he have had an understanding with me, and I'd have accompanied her to his house? Now, woe's me, I don't know where to turn, and it's dreadful to think of spending the whole night here catching cold—unless some kind soul should pass this way and be moved to pity me.

SCENE EIGHT

(CATTE and LELIO.)

Lelio. How I do love Venice! I've been away so many years

that I'd forgotten it. The women—these Venetians—they'd make the very stones fall in love! Even the ugly ones have a style of their own. And the ladies of pleasure, too! What clothes! What an air about them! What waists! What faces! What perfume! What creamy skins!

Catte. (A foreigner, it seems.)

Lelio. A woman, surely? You meet good luck like this at all hours here. How annoying that I've no money!

Catte (*approaching him*). (I'll just go along and see if I know him.)

Lelio. All alone, lady?

Catte. Unfortunately.

Lelio. What's happened?

Catte. I've lost my companion, and can't get home.

Lelio. May I accompany you?

Catte. If you would.

Lelio. Have you supped?

Catte. No, sir.

Lelio. Nor have I.

Catte. I suppose you do sup of nights?

Lelio. When I can.

Catte. When you can?

Lelio. Yes—when I've the money.

Catte. And to-night you have none?

Lelio. I'm dry as tinder.

Catte. (I've struck a fortune!)

Lelio. Would you care to stop and drink a glass of muscada?

Catte. But you said you'd no money?

Lelio. I count upon you.

Catte. To pay?

Lelio. We'll each pay for one round.

Catte. (Confound him!) Muscada doesn't agree with me.

Lelio. Then, perhaps you've some good wine at home?

Catte. Only the common wine, you know.

Lelio. But I love that.

Catte. (If I don't want to go alone I must put up with him.)

Lelio. That's my way with women—when I've money I spend it; but when I haven't, I say so, and I'm glad to take what they give.

Catte. In Venice you won't find many who give.

Lelio. But you'll give me your hand!

Catte. Here, then. (I couldn't have found worse!)

SCENE NINE

(Those present, and PANTALONE with a lantern.)

Pantalone. Ha—you rascal—you're here!

Lelio. (Hang it! Father's taken to dogging my steps.)

(*He runs off.*)

Pantalone. What's this, Si'ora Catte? Out here at this time o' night? Where's Bettina? And what are you doing here with my son?

Catte. Oh, dear dear Si'or Pantalone—what tears I've shed! How I've raged! As you see, they've escaped me. They've carried her off to who knows where, and left me a-wandering. I know nothing about my sister. I've no news, no message.

Pantalone. But what were you doing with my son?

Catte. That scamp—your son? I had no idea who he was. I couldn't see an inch in this darkness, and I'd lost my way. He offered to escort me, and I accepted the chance.

Pantalone. He's a disgrace! He has given me endless trouble, Si'ora Catte. To have a son who's a rascal is an intolerable burden. And then—to have lost Bettina! I'll remedy the first this very night, for I've hunted out the blackguards who do the dirty work for the police here, and I've paid them to give him a thorough fright—but next time it'll be in earnest. As for Bettina, I suspect the Marquis and I'm doubtful about Pasqualino. But I've set men to search her out. I'll never stop till I get the truth; and whoever did this, I swear, on my honour as a merchant, he will have to settle with me.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE TEN

(CATTE alone.)

Catte. A fine vow indeed! I don't say there are no honourable merchants, but I do know that if you want a carpet on credit you have to pay two shillings a yard beyond its worth. He sold me this shawl as double Florentine, and it came from Modena. And when I take him the money on account he always says that the coins are under weight so that he can deduct something from the receipt. You can't live these days. They want everything for themselves. But here I am standing about and talking to myself in the open street like a lunatic. Ah, there's a boat's lantern coming. If it goes in my direction I'll follow it.

SCENE ELEVEN

(CATTE, BEATRICE masked in a domino, BETTINA with shawl and mask, and a SERVANT with a lantern.)

Beatrice. It's a fact. Water makes me seasick. I can't travel by boat so I go on land.

Bettina. Where are we going, your Excellency?

Beatrice. To the play.

Bettina. Heaven help me if the Marquis should find me!

Beatrice. If I'm with you, he won't dare even to look at you.

Catte. Bettina! Is it you?

Bettina. Oh, dear—I'm trembling all over. Who's that calling?

Catte. Catte, your sister.

Bettina. Oh, let me hug you! (*They embrace.*)

Beatrice. Who is this?

Catte (to Beatrice). Look you, I'm an honest woman. What are you afraid of?

Bettina. How about Pasqualino?

Catte. I've not seen him yet. I was lost in this street, and I don't know where I am nor whither I'm going.

Bettina. I can't bear it, sister—if I don't see him I shall die.

Catte. Tell me what happened?

Bettina. I will—oh, something dreadful . . .

Catte. The Marquis?

Bettina. Yes—the brute!

Catte. Well, and what yarn are we going to spin?

Bettina. About what?

Catte. Oh, *you* know.

Bettina. Why, none.

Catte. Nothing happened?

Bettina. Thanks to her ladyship.

Catte. Who is she?

Bettina. His wife.

Catte. What? Come, come!

Beatrice (to Bettina). Will you never have done with your babble?

Bettina. I'm just coming, Excellency. And what of Si'or Pantalone?

Catte. He passed here a minute ago—simply beside himself.

Bettina. Poor thing—I'm sorry for him.

Beatrice (to Bettina). It's getting late. The play will have started.

Catte. You're going to the theatre?

Bettina. I'm obliged to go.

Catte. If only *I* could!

Bettina. Excellency, would you mind if my sister comes too?

Beatrice. Without a mask?

Catte. Oh, that's all right. I'll mask in my shawl.

Beatrice. Come along, then. (*She goes on with the Servant.*)

Bettina. I'm not a bit in the mood.

Catte. Oh, come along. We'll have a good laugh.

Bettina. I'd much rather cry.

Catte. You've no spirit.

Beatrice (to Bettina). Go on ahead, child.

Bettina. Yes, ma'am. (How much more gladly I'd run with my Pasqualino!)

Beatrice. I mean to put an end to this affair to-night. Pasqualino is now warned, anyway. (*Exeunt*)

SCENE TWELVE

A View of the Grand Canal with gondolas. On one side an enclosure, with tables, leading into the theatre. In front, the exit-door of the theatre and the small window at which tickets are bought for the play. From time to time a Boy shouts, 'Tickets here—fivepence each. The window's here, gentlemen.' On the other side, a bench that will accommodate four persons, and lanterns hung here and there as is usual in the neighbourhood of theatres.

Various masks pass. Some buy tickets and then go in, others go in without tickets. Nanne the Boatman comes on with a lantern, conducting maskers to the theatre. Afterwards, the Servant, with a lantern, conducting Beatrice, Bettina, and Catte; then Cainello with Ottavio and four men who go into the theatre. All this time the Boy keeps up the cry, 'Take your tickets,' etc., and then some one from inside calls, 'This way out.' A door opens, and Menego and Nanne come out with their lanterns.

Menego. Ah, Nanne—well met!

Nanne. Ah, Menego—how are you?

Menego. No harm done, then?

Nanne. What d'you mean?

Menego. That mouthful we exchanged.

Nanne. I'd forgotten all about it.

Menego. Yes, we're enemies on the poop but friends and brothers on shore, eh?

Nanne. Oh, a row's necessary for reputation sometimes. You know well enough I've nothing against you.

Menego. Why did I refuse to back that time? For the master? Not a bit of it. There were fifty gondoliers watching me, and I've got to set them the fashion.

Nanne. You've taken your master to the play?

Menego. I have, mate.

Nanne. And I'm here with a fare—a foreigner—who came here this morning. I've served him before now, and he treated me decently.

Menego. Plenty of money?

Nanne. And style, too.

Menego. A woman with him?

Nanne. Don't know her.

Menego. Well—yarn away.

Nanne. Let's go to the shop.

Menego. Right you are—and get out of the cold.

Nanne. Yes, the wind's rising.

Menego. Pooh! We'll trim to the wind with a bottle of wine.

(*To the Boy.*) Here—you scamp with the tickets!

Boy. Well?

Menego. Get us a bottle of that Muscada from the cellar.

Tell the head waiter that Cainello sent you, and that he's to give you what he gives to his friends. Understand?

Boy. Right.

Menego. Hurry up. Don't stand there bewitched—and I'll give you a penny.

Boy. I'll be there and back in a twinkling. (*Exit.*)

Menego. You there, mate?

Nanne. I'm here.

Menego. What's he like, your foreigner?

Nanne. Good enough. He gave me a ducat a day for myself —with food and drink, too—and when he wanted two oars he paid the other chap a fair half.

Menego. Must be mighty rich.

Nanne. The valet at the inn, who comes from his country, told me that his people haven't even bread to eat.

Menego. Then how does he make his money?

Nanne. Oh—cards.

Menego. And he keeps a woman on them?

Nanne. Or she keeps him.

Menego. He entertains a good deal?

Nanne. Folk always coming and going.

Menego. The master's industrious?

Nanne. Industrious! Why, he's up in the early morning to gamble.

Menego. Mine has a good stomach, too.

Nanne. But he has a wife, hasn't he?

Menego. Oh, yes—but what does that matter? It's the fashion—new days, new ways.

Nanne. How's he off for money, yours?

Menego. Flings it about enough to alarm you, but really he hasn't a farthing.

Nanne. A pretty pair!

Menego. Hark you—one of these days—you know! First you see me, then you don't!

Nanne. They'll crash?

Menego. Bah! Fools of that kind don't crash. They retire to the country, dismiss the servants, fast for a couple of years, and then back they come to Venice, boring people again.

Nanne. They say his wife's going headlong with the cash.

Menego. And meanwhile the needy are left to hope.

Nanne. D'you get your own pay?

Menego. Please God—I shall, if they want me to.

SCENE THIRTEEN

(Those present, and the BOY with the Wine.)

Boy. Hullo there! Here's the wine.

Menego. Good.

Boy. Where's my penny?

Menego. Eh? Of course! I'm a gentleman. Here you are—go and buy baked apples. (*He gives the Boy a penny.*)

Boy. Gentlemen, gentlemen—take your tickets! (*To the doorkeeper.*) I say, do let me in now. I've been on my feet these four hours. (*He goes into the theatre.*)

Menego (*raising his glass*). Here's luck!

Nanne. Same to you.

Menego. Your health!

SCENE FOURTEEN

(Those present, and TITA coming out from the theatre.)

Menego (*to Tita*). Hullo, mate! Come and join us?

Tita. Hullo, mates!

Menego. Too haughty to join us?

Tita. Not I.

Menego (*giving him a glass*). Here you are, then. I'll settle up later.

Tita. Wine's good, but it's twice as good from a friend's hand.

Menego (*filling up his glass*). Well, here's how to treat such fellows as you.

Nanne. What's on at the theatre?

Tita. Lord, how we laughed.

Menego. Plenty of folks?

Tita. Packed.

Menego. And they like it?

Nanne. Silly creatures! You know what this country is like. First they're delighted, then they get tired, and it needs the back rows to hearten things up.

(*Applause within, and cries of 'Bravo, bravo.'*)

Menego. Ah! hear that?

Tita. You see? It's going well.

Menego. Many boatmen in there?

Tita. Over a hundred.

Menego. If they like it, it must be good. It's we who make the fortunes of comedies. If we like them we go about everywhere, saying, 'Ah, what a comedy, what a comedy! An exquisite thing!' And in there, too, if we applaud, every one applauds; and what's more, we like the real thing. None of your devilries and intrigues for us. We like comedies that have sap.

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Those present, and a CAPTAIN OF POLICE with his Men; afterwards LELIO.)

Nanne. Hullo! The police!

Tita. On the lookout for some one.

Nanne. Maybe. They go nosing out evil like the Medici.

Menego. Nonsense. They always go into theatres—and a

good thing, too. That's how they keep an eye on pick-pockets.

Lelio. (Bless my soul! three boatmen enjoying themselves no end! A jolly bunch!)

Menego. Who's this fine gentleman peering at all and sundry?

Tita. Want a boat, sir?

Lelio. Why, Tita, is it you?

Tita. Si'or Lelio!

Menego. Who is he? One of the petty gentry?

Tita. A native of Venice brought up in Leghorn.

Nanne. Venetian? Then he's welcome. At your service!

Menego (*giving Lelio wine*). Your health—and long live Venice!

Lelio. It's good to be with the likes of you. May I sit with you?

Menego. Make yourself at home.

Lelio. Come on, old chap—another bottle!

Nanne. As you like, mate.

SCENE SIXTEEN

A Spy goes to the Police and signs to them that he has discovered Lelio. They arrest him. The Boatmen defend him with bottles, stones, and the bench. They rout the Police, and cry after them, 'Off with you! Villains! Leave him alone!'

Nanne. Victory!

Lelio. Splendid! I'm much obliged to you.

Menego. Three cheers for ourselves!

All. Three cheers for the boatmen!

SCENE SEVENTEEN

Beatrice masked and dressed in Catta's clothes, Bettina in those of Beatrice, and the Servant with a lantern, come out from the theatre.

Bettina. Why did you make this change, your ladyship? I don't know how to wear this dress.

Beatrice. We were seen by my husband. I saw that he recognized us, and that's why I changed clothes with you behind the door of the box.

Bettina. I still don't see why

Beatrice. You will—later.

Bettina. But where is my sister?

Beatrice. I've a plan, and I sent her home with my cousin, the Countess, in order to get her out of the way.

Bettina. (What a night this is!)

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(Those present and PASQUALINO.)

Pasqualino. O treacherous fortune! Wherever has my Bettina vanished?

Bettina. (My dear, if only I could tell you that it's I!)

Beatrice. Here's Pasqualino. I had him sent for.

Bettina. Why?

Beatrice. For you.

Bettina. For me? What can I do with him?

Beatrice. Aren't you betrothed?

Bettina. Yes.

Beatrice. Then go off with him.

Bettina. Oh, I can't. He's not my husband yet.

Beatrice. And just for that . . . ?

Bettina. I'm a good girl.

Beatrice. (Yes—much too good!)

Pasqualino. The mistress sent for me. They said she expected me here. What *can* she want? And where has my Bettina gone? Was she untrue to me? I feel as if I shall die.

Beatrice. (Look at him! Doesn't he move you to pity?)

Bettina. (But then . . . he loves me and I love him. There's no knowing what might happen.)

Beatrice. (Oh, you're too strict.)

Bettina. (I'm a respectable girl.)

Beatrice (to herself). (Then you're rare as a white fly!)

Pasqualino. (Those two masks are watching me. Can one

of them be the mistress? That looks like her cloak. And the other with the shawl and the domino—it couldn't be Bettina? Oh, heavens—if it were!

Beatrice. (Come—put an end to this.)

Bettina. (Oh, no no. Rather, let's go away.)

SCENE NINETEEN

(Those present, and OTTAVIO coming from the theatre door with four Men.)

Ottavio. There she is—with Bettina. (*To the Men.*) Stand ready.

Bettina. Oh dear, oh dear! who is that mask over there?

Beatrice. Don't stir.

Ottavio (*forcibly snatching the Marquise by the hand, supposing her to be Bettina*). Found at last! You'll not slip out of my hands again. (*To Bettina, thinking her to be Beatrice.*) And you, Marquise, if you don't behave sensibly you'll have me to deal with. Pasqualino, what are you doing here?

Pasqualino. Oh, sir, just strolling about. . . . I went to the play.

Ottavio. Give your arm to the Marquise. (*To Bettina.*) I swear you shall pay for this. (*To Beatrice.*) Come, my love, let us go where our hearts' happiness awaits us.

(*Exit with Beatrice and the Men.*)

SCENE TWENTY

(BETTINA and PASQUALINO.)

Pasqualino. Your Excellency, I am at your service. Will you not give me your hand? No? I am unworthy? It was the master's order. . . . Won't your ladyship tell me why you sent for me? No? Very well, ma'am. . . . Who was that mask in the shawl? Was it Bettina? Your ladyship is crying? I see the tears falling on your cheeks. You are hiding your face, and drying them. You won't take my hand? Well, then. Don't you want to go home, your

ladyship? (*Bettina nods 'Yes.'*) Yes? You shall be obeyed. But your hand—no? (*Bettina refuses.*) Very good. Oh, if I don't find Bettina I shall despair!

(*Exit.*)

Bettina. Unmask? Of course not. Two lovers alone together at night? If he'd recognized me I don't know what would have happened.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

A Ground-floor Room in the House of the Marquis.

(Present, MENEGO with a lantern, and LELIO.)

Menego. So your father wants to put you in gaol?

Lelio. He does.

Menego. But why?

Lelio. Oh, he's mad. He wants to order my life, but I'm not that sort.

Menego. Look you, sir, I defended you from the police and got you clear of them because they'd no warrant for your arrest. Besides, they showed too much impudence—breaking into a gathering of honest men and insulting us. But take it from me—sons must obey their fathers, and, seeing how you live, your father was right to want to chastise you and stop you from playing the fool, for bad sons excuse themselves later on by saying that they were badly brought-up.

Lelio. But if I detest everything that my father likes? Now, if I were your son and had to make my living as you make yours, I should then be perfectly happy.

Menego. And yet you might grow tired of it. To go out on the water for pleasure may be all very well, but having to row by day or night, in rain, sleet, or snow, with the wind blowing, and in the dark, and maybe with bad customers, that's an amusement we could very well do without.

Lelio. Perhaps; but every one has some enthusiasm, and this is mine.

SCENE TWENTY-TWO

(Those present and DONNA PASQUA.)

Donna Pasqua. Why, Menego, where *have* you been?

Everybody's been looking for you, and I among them.

Menego. Ah, wife, you're just the person I want.

Donna Pasqua. Come, come, my dear; it's so long since I saw you! Give us your hand.

Menego. Ah, my little old lass, you and I'll hug each other and no mistake.

Lelio. (The good old thing! I just love her.)

Donna Pasqua. What can you be doing with this handsome young gentleman?

Menego. You like him?

Donna Pasqua. I do, indeed.

Menego. Well, let's sit down together.

Donna Pasqua. I could give him a kiss, I could!

Menego. All right, fire away. You're not afraid of *me* being jealous?

Donna Pasqua. (You wouldn't say that if you knew who he is!)

SCENE TWENTY-THREE

(Those present and PANTALONE.)

Pantalone (*without*). Menego, may I enter?

Menego. Who is it? Come along.

Lelio. (Oh, misery—my father!)

Pantalone. Ah, you rascal! so you're here! Menego, I'm amazed that you stick by such a ruffian. I heard he'd come here. And now I've found the villain.

Donna Pasqua. Is that how you speak of your son, Si'or Pantalone?

Pantalone. If you knew how badly he has turned out, nurse, you would pity me, thinking of how you yourself rocked his cradle.

Menego. What's wrong in him?

Lelio. Nothing. I've done *him* no wrong.

Pantalone. Is it nothing to have tried to beat me?

Lelio. But I didn't know who you were.

Pantalone. Excuse yourself as you may, you won't stay here.

I have spoken to a captain in the navy who's sailing at once.

You'll go to the Levant. You shall be a sailor, and I hope you'll then be satisfied!

Donna Pasqua. (Poor lad! That simply mustn't happen to him.)

Lelio. I—to the Levant? That *would* be kind!

Pantalone. Yes, to the Levant, sirrah. If you won't go for love, you'll go by force. I'm waiting till the Marquis shall get home in order to wait on him formally. Then, Master Good-for-nothing, you shall see what will happen.

Lelio. I swear to heaven, I don't know what prevents me . . .
(*he threatens Pantalone.*)

Menego (*tearing him away*). Stop, stop!

Pantalone. This—to your father? You threaten *me*? Quick, you police fellows—where are you? My son's assaulting me!

Donna Pasqua. (My poor boy! And I'm the cause of his ruin.)

Menego (*to Pantalone*). Let him be, and we'll put all this right.

Pantalone. I don't want your advice. When a son loses respect for his father, he deserves no sympathy. He shall go to gaol.

Donna Pasqua. He won't, though. Just you wait.

Pantalone. Why won't he?

Donna Pasqua. (What shall I do? Speak or stay silent? If I say nothing he'll go to prison. Heaven help me! I must speak out.) Why? Because he is *not* your son!

Pantalone. Not my son? What on earth . . . ! How do you mean, nurse?

Donna Pasqua. Seeing him come to this, I can't keep silence. I changed him in the cradle!

Pantalone. Then, whose son is he?

Donna Pasqua. Mine—and my husband's.

Menego. What!

Donna Pasqua. My dear, it's true. I meant it for the best.

I wanted him to be well brought-up and have everything he could wish and become a well-bred boy.

Menego. A fine thing you've done!

Pantalone. But what did you do with *my* boy?

Donna Pasqua. It's Pasqualino—who thinks he's my son.

Pantalone. Pasqualino . . . yes, yes. . . . I believe that . . . it's likely enough. The lad has good manners and is respected, but this fellow here is a brainless lout. I recognize my blood in Pasqualino, but only plebeian blood in this Lelio. Keep the fellow, for I'm going to embrace my own dear son. As for this boy, I forgive him. He has merely acted in accord with his nature, and I now see that instinct could not protect me from him. I want no further proof of your assertion. The two lads are proof enough. You crazy woman! Truth will out, and errors hit back at those who commit them. You can't expect good to come out of evil, but in women love and hate are equally pernicious, and the best thing for all of you would be to put yourselves one by one in a mortar and allow yourselves to be pounded up as they pound up medicine! *(Exit.)*

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR

(LELIO, MENEGO, and DONNA PASQUA.)

Lelio. Was it the truth you told, Signora, or did you say that to save me from prison?

Donna Pasqua. My boy, my boy—it was true!

Lelio. Then I'm the happiest man in the world.

Menego. But I'm not.

Lelio. My dear father—why not?

Menego. I hardly think I'm lucky, acquiring such a flower of virtue as yourself!

Lelio. Why, come! I've been a bit of a good-for-nothing, it's true, but only because I was expected to be something

for which I'd no inclination. Give me a red cap, stick an oar in my hand, set a good boat beneath me, and you shall see if I don't make good!

Menego. Well, you may have it in you. (*To Donna Pasqua.*)
Wife, you've made a fine mess of things!

Donna Pasqua. Come, now, don't get in a rage. Be kind to me—I'm your old woman, after all.

Menego. If you'd merely lost me a good son, I could let it pass; but to have found me a bad one—really! You'd have done better to say nothing, and have let him go to his disgrace. (*Exit.*)

Lelio. A most affectionate father!

Donna Pasqua. He'll love you in time.

Lelio. As he likes! I feel just as if born again. Having to play the gentleman—that's what bothered me. I couldn't see how to be rid of that. (*Exit.*)

Donna Pasqua. I meant to say nothing, but I couldn't help myself. After all, I *am* his mother; and if I'd lost that son I doubt if I'd get a second. Who knows? Perhaps . . . I'm not so old, and my old man loves me right enough. And there goes the son whom I've hardly seen yet, but after supper I'll catch him again and squeeze him as hard as lemon. (*Exit.*)

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE

Another Room in the House of the Marquis. Candles.

(Present, OTTAVIO and BEATRICE, masked as before.)

Ottavio. Come, come, little Bettina. Be good. Don't be so distant when I love you so. But I know your modesty. You scorn to love a married man, and I know that so long as I am not free I mustn't hope to enjoy your favours. But you'd better know—I tell you in confidence—my wife has a certain malady which must prove fatal before long. (This is the best way to lead her.)

Beatrice (unmasking). You're far too kind. Oh, you vile, false rogue! So you let your brutal passions carry you so

far as to wish for the death of your wife—and perhaps to the procuring of it, so that no one shall be able to reproach you. But here once more you are discovered, disillusioned, and mortified, and this time I've learned how completely contemptible you are. You desire my death; and now that I know that, I shall take steps to divorce you. You will have to repay me my dowry, you will have to give alimony, and both your relatives and mine will know everything. All Venice will know. Think well of this. I have. (*Exit.*)

Ottavio. This affair is going to prove my ruin. The devil's in that wife of mine. I'd better drop the girl. Indeed, I'm mad as a hatter to make such a to-do over a woman at a time when women are going so cheap. (*Exit.*)

SCENE TWENTY-SIX

(*BEATRICE, leading BETTINA by the hand in the dark; the latter masked.*)

Bettina. Dear Excellency, where are you taking me?

Beatrice. Where you'll be safe from my husband's persecutions.

Bettina. But where is Pasqualino?

Beatrice. Tell me—if Pasqualino were to come to you here in the dark, would you be glad to have him?

Bettina. No, no, your Excellency. For the love of heaven, don't let him come!

Beatrice. Really?

Bettina. Certainly not.

Beatrice. (I don't believe it.) Stay here a minute. I'll be back soon.

Bettina. In the dark?

Beatrice. Only a minute—till the Marquis has gone to bed. (*Exit*)

Bettina (finding a seat). I must be patient. How long? It was torture to be so near Pasqualino, and I masked so that he didn't know me. I felt my heart break. But honour is a great thing.

SCENE TWENTY-SEVEN

(BETTINA, then BEATRICE with PASQUALINO, in the dark.)

Beatrice (aloud, so that Bettina shall hear). Stay here, Pasqualino, till I return. You needn't be anxious. I'll lock you in.

Pasqualino. But why here?

Beatrice. You'll soon know. Good-bye. Good night. (*She goes out and locks the door.*)

Bettina. (Poor Bettina! Now, indeed, you're in a fix!)

Pasqualino. This is all very fine—putting me in a dark room without telling me why. What am I supposed to do here, with no light? Ah, if Bettina were here, I should know what to do! But heaven alone knows where she is.

Bettina. (Oh, I can't bear any more!)

Pasqualino. And who could have guessed it? Such a good girl that she wouldn't have me in the house for fear of losing her reputation—she to run away, ruin herself, and lose her honour!

Bettina. (Oh, I'm tormented!)

Pasqualino. Ah, Bettina—you traitor, you thief, you slayer of my heart! (*Bettina weeps audibly.*) What's that? Some one here? Help! Who's there? Am I trapped? A woman? Who are you? If it were Bettina's soul! But it's a body—with no life in it. This is horrible. For pity's sake, speak! No answer. And what's that? I saw a light pass by the keyhole. Ho, people—help! Open the door!

SCENE TWENTY-EIGHT

(Those present, and BEATRICE bringing a candle.)

Beatrice. What is it, Pasqualino? What's the matter?

Pasqualino. There's somebody here.

Beatrice. And you cried out for that?

Pasqualino. I found a woman.

Beatrice. Well?

Pasqualino. Who is she?

Beatrice. See for yourself.

Pasqualino (throwing himself at Bettina's feet). You, you—
my love!

Bettina. Oh, now we shall both just die of happiness!

Pasqualino. But why didn't you speak?

Bettina. I'm a respectable girl.

Beatrice. I believe it now. I could never have thought that
a young woman who is betrothed could have had so much
self-control.

Pasqualino. Why are you here? What could have brought
you from home?

Beatrice. You shall know in good time. Come, child, your
honesty is rewarded. Give your hand to your bridegroom.

Pasqualino. Here I am, dear heart, if you'll have me.

Bettina. But what can we do without a dowry? Si'or
Pantalone must give me those two hundred ducats.

Pasqualino. Si'or Pantalone? Why, there he is!

SCENE TWENTY-NINE

(Those present and PANTALONE.)

Pantalone. My dear son! Let me embrace you!

Pasqualino. Me—Si'or Pantalone?

Pantalone. Don't call me that—call me father. Donna Pasqua
is not your mother. I gave you to her to nurse, and she
changed you in the cradle. It is true—you are my own son.

Bettina. Alack for me! Then Pasqualino won't be my
husband!

Pasqualino. Oh, how good it is to have found a father who is
well-born, rich, and kind! But my happiness is embittered
by a pain that will kill me.

Pantalone. Why, my boy? Speak plainly.

Pasqualino. You know that I was affianced to Bettina and
meant to wed her, but now, being your son . . .

Pantalone. Now, being my son, you are to get married at
once. There's nothing that Bettina doesn't deserve. True,
I wanted her for myself, but it's better that she should be

yours, and I not only give her to you but myself put her hand in yours. (*He draws them together.*)

Pasqualino (*touching her hand*). Oh, heaven! What is happening to me?

Bettina. I'm dying of joy! (*She swoons into a chair.*)

Pantalone. Water! Ho, there—help!

LAST SCENE

(Those present, OTTAVIO, CATTE, LELIO, ARLECCHINO, and BRIGHELLA. They all come running to see what has happened. They bring her to.)

Pantalone. Wait. Leave it to me. I'll bring her to. Here, my boy—come! (*He draws out a pair of scissors, cuts off a piece of Pasqualino's hair, singes it, and places it under Bettina's nose. She revives.*) What did I say? You see? The male odour revives the female. I expect you knew that, Marquis?

Ottavio. I know everything. I know that Pasqualino has turned out to be your son and that he is to be Bettina's husband, and I'm glad of it. I beg you, if you can, arrange matters so that my wife shall forgive my frailty.

Pantalone (*to Beatrice*). Well, signora?

Beatrice (*to Ottavio*). If you'll alter your life I'll forgive you.

Ottavio. If there's to be any altering, we must both alter.

Beatrice. I'll pledge to that.

Ottavio. And I.

Menego. (These are sailors' and gamesters' oaths!)

Lelio. Happy lovers, I rejoice for you! (*To Pasqualino.*)

Friend, we can make a deal. We've changed conditions.

Let's change our clothes, too.

Pasqualino. As you wish. All I want is Bettina.

Lelio. (You won't say that in a week's time.)

Catte. Good folk, since you're all so happy, may I put put in a word?

Ottavio. What you will.

Catte. There can't be a wedding and no festivities? Not a handful of confetti, not a drop of chocolate? And no wine?

Ottavio. Brighella, go and order four of the sweets from my desert and a decanter of good wine. Menego, you go along, too. (*Exit Brighella.*)

Menego. I? What am I to do so, sir?

Ottavio. Help bring in something.

Menego. Me? You'll excuse me, sir; we don't fetch and carry, we gondoliers. That's not our job. Each to his own. Mine's to look after the boat.

Pantalone. He's right there. It's a point of honour with them to do nothing except look after their boats.

Ottavio. Very well. I stand corrected.

(Brighella and other Servants enter with food and wine.)

Ottavio. Offer the wine to the lovers and to every one.

Catte (drinking). Three cheers for the lovers!

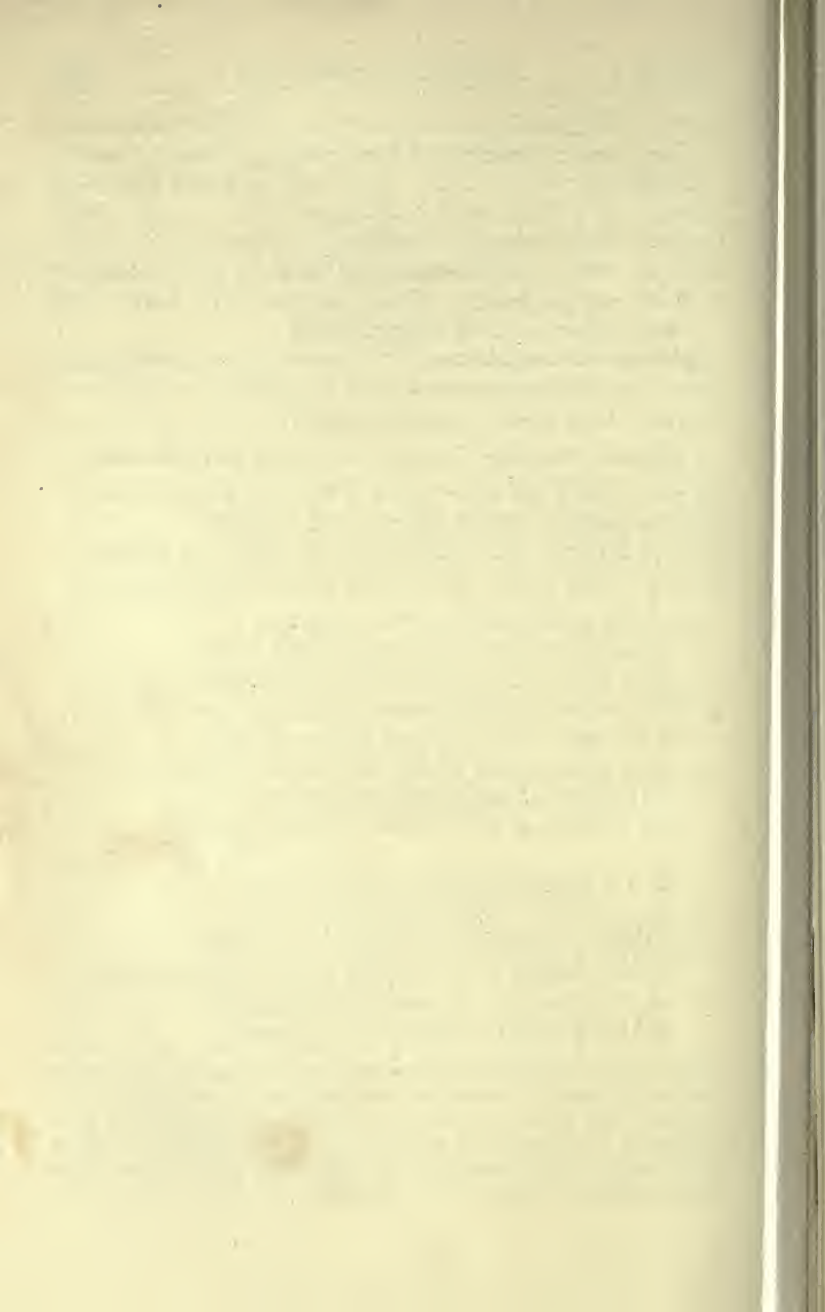
Lelio (drinking). Three cheers for the bride and groom!

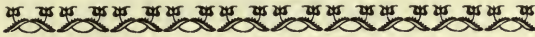
Bettina (taking a glass of wine and addressing the audience):

As I lift up this sweet wine, I conceive
 A sweeter wish within my doubtful heart,
 And that, in turn, to sweetest ears impart—
 Thus, with a humble sonnet, taking my leave :
 For though success be yours to stint or give,
 And though your frown may throw the fatal dart,
 I trust that if our well-intending art
 Have failed, you will be swift to grant reprieve.

And if I showed myself a good girl here,
 Let me now to the general sisterhood
 Say these two words (but in their secret ear):
 Strong though Love's urging is, be you more strong,
 And, knowing well the worth of being good,
 Be ready rather to die than to do wrong.

[*Note.* I have included this comedy because it forms an interesting example of Goldoni's naturalism emerging from the tradition of the *Commedia dell' Arte*; but, with the consent of the Translator, I have abridged it. The reader will see that it is the earliest of the four plays in this book. The Translator is not responsible for the rather loose verse-paraphrases.—*Ed.*]





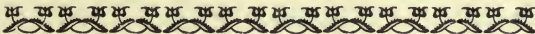
THE FAN

A COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS



Produced for the first
time in Venice on
February 4th, 1765

Translated by
ELEANOR & HERBERT FARJEON



CHARACTERS

SIGNOR EVARISTO.

SIGNORA GELTRUDE, a Widow.

SIGNORA CANDIDA, her Niece.

BARON DEL CEDRO.

COUNT DI ROCCA MARINA.

TIMOTEO, an Apothecary.

GIANNINA, a Peasant Girl.

SIGNORA SUSANNA, a Shopkeeper.

CORONATO, an Innkeeper.

CRESPINO, a Shoemaker.

MORACCHIO, a Peasant, Brother to Giannina.

LEMONADO, a Waiter.

TOGNINO, Servant to the Two Ladies.

SCAVEZZO, Servant at the Inn.

THE SCENE IS LAID IN CASE NUOVE,
A VILLAGE NEAR MILAN.

THE FAN

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

OMNES.

Geltrude and Candida, sitting on their terrace: the former busy netting, the latter embroidering. Evaristo and the Baron, in hunting-costume, their guns beside them, seated, drinking coffee. The Count, in country get-up, with riding-coat, straw hat and stick, sitting near the Apothecary's, reading a book. Timoteo, inside his shop, pounding in a bronze mortar on the sill. Giannina, in peasant costume, sitting by her door, spinning. Susanna, sitting outside her shop, sewing some linen. Coronato, sitting on a bench by the inn, with a notebook and a pencil in his hand. Crespino, sitting at his bench, cobbling a shoe on a last. In the front of the stage, Moracchio, on one side, by Giannina's house, holding a hunting-dog on a leash, feeding it with bread. Scavezzo, on the other side, by the inn, plucking a chicken. Lemonado, by the two coffee drinkers, with a tray in his hand, waiting for the cups. Tognino, sweeping the threshold and façade of the villa. On the rise of the curtain, all remain silent for a few moments, pursuing their occupations, in order to give the audience time to take in the scene.

Evaristo (to the Baron). How do you like this coffee?

Baron. It is good.

Evaristo. I find it excellent. Bravo, Signor Lemonado, you have done yourself credit to-day.

Lemonado. Thank you for your commendation; but I beg you not to call me Lemonado.

Evaristo. Tut, tut! everybody knows you by that name, as

Lemonado you are famous. All the world says: 'Let us go to Case Nuove and drink coffee at Lemonado's'—and are you any the worse for that?

Lemonado. Sir, it is not my name.

Baron. Oh, well, in future we will call you Signor Orangino or Signor Apricotto. (*Drinks coffee.*)

Lemonado. I won't be made a laughing-stock, I tell you.

(*Candida laughs aloud.*)

Evaristo. What do you say, Signora Candida?

Candida (*fans herself and puts fan down on parapet*). What should I say? Some things can only be laughed at.

Geltrude. Come, gentlemen, leave the poor fellow alone.

He makes good coffee, and he is under my protection.

Baron. Oh, if he is under the protection of Signora Geltrude, he must be respected. (*Aside to Evaristo.*) You hear!

The good widow protects him!

Evaristo (*aside to the Baron*). Not a word against Signora Geltrude. She is the most prudent and virtuous lady in the world.

Baron. Just as you please, but she plumes herself on her protection as much as . . . as the Count, who sits reading there with all the airs of a connoisseur.

Evaristo. Oh, there you're right. He is a perfect caricature.

But it is unjust to compare him with Signora Geltrude.

Baron. Well, taking them all round, I find them both ridiculous.

Evaristo. And what do you find ridiculous in Signora Geltrude?

Baron. Too sententious, too superior, too self-sufficient.

Evaristo. Pardon me, you do not know her.

Baron. I admire Signora Candida a hundred times more.

(*The Baron and Evaristo finish their coffee. They get up and give their cups to Lemonado. Both offer to pay. The Baron prevails; Evaristo thanks him. Lemonado goes into the café with the cups and money. Meanwhile Timoteo begins to pound more loudly.*)

Svaristo. True. The niece has her points. (I hope this fellow is not going to be a rival.)

Count (pompously). Hey! Signor Timoteo!

Timoteo. What is it?

Count. Your pounding annoys me.

Timoteo. Sorry. (Goes on pounding.)

Count. I cannot read. My head is splitting.

Timoteo. Sorry—I've just done. (Continues to sift and pound.)

Crespino (working and laughing). Hi! Coronato!

Coronato. What is it, Master Crespino?

Crespino (banging on his last). The Count doesn't want us to make a noise.

Count. Deuce take your impudence! Are you going on all day?

Crespino. Doesn't your Honour see what I'm doing?

Count (disdainfully). What are you doing?

Crespino. Mending your old shoes.

Count. Hold your tongue, rascal! (Begins to read again.)

Crespino (laughing and banging; *Timoteo* bangs too). Coronato!

Count (fidgeting on his seat). I can bear this no longer!

Scavezzo (grinning as he calls). Moracchio!

Moracchio. What is it, Scavezzo?

Scavezzo (laughing and mimicking the Count). His lordship!

Moracchio. Sh! sh! After all, he's a gentleman.

Scavezzo. A poor one!

Giannina (calling). Moracchio!

Moracchio. What do you want?

Giannina. What was Scavezzo saying?

Moracchio. Nothing, nothing. Get on with your spinning.

Giannina. There's politeness for you! That's the way my brother always treats me. (Oh, how I wish I were married!) (Turns her back on him and spins viciously.)

Susanna. What is it, Giannina? What's the matter?

Giannina. Oh, if you only knew, Signora Susanna! I don't believe there's a bigger brute in the world than my brother.

Moracchio. All right! I am what I am. Say what you like.

But as long as you're in my keeping . . .

Giannina (still spinning viciously). Your keeping? Well, hope it won't be much longer.

Evaristo. Come, what's the trouble? (*To Moracchio*.) You are always teasing this poor girl. (*Approaching her*.) And she doesn't deserve it, poor child!

Giannina. He drives me mad!

Moracchio. She pokes her nose into everything!

Evaristo. Come, come, that's enough!

Baron (*to Candida*). Signor Evaristo is—sympathetic!

Candida (*with some feeling*). So it seems.

Geltrude (*to Candida*). Hoity-toity! People who criticize the behaviour of others should first look to their own.

Baron. (There! that's the sort of phrase-mongering I can't stand.)

Crespino (*working*). (Poor Giannina! When she is my wife that boor shan't torment her any more.)

Coronato. (Yes, I'd marry her, if it were only to get her away from that brother of hers.)

Evaristo (*advancing towards the Baron*). Well, Baron, shall we go?

Baron. To tell you the truth, I don't feel like shooting this morning. I am fatigued after yesterday . . .

Evaristo. As you please. You will excuse me if I go?

Baron. By all means. (So much the better for me! I shall have a chance of trying my luck with Signora Candida.)

Evaristo. Moracchio!

Moracchio. Sir?

Evaristo. Has the dog been fed?

Moracchio. Yes, sir.

Evaristo. Then fetch your gun, and let us go.

Moracchio. I'll fetch it at once. (*To Giannina*.) Here, catch hold!

Giannina. Catch hold of what?

Moracchio. This dog—till I come back.

Giannina. Hand it over, curse you! (*Takes the dog and caresses it. Moracchio goes into the house.*)

Coronato. (What a dear affectionate girl she is! I'd like to marry her on the spot.)

Crespino. (How charmingly she caresses it! If she can do that to a dog, what wouldn't she do to a husband?)

Baron. Scavezzo!

Scavezzo (*advancing*). Yes, sir.

Baron. Take this gun to my room.

Scavezzo. Very good, sir. (Now, *he's* what I call really generous. Very different from that niggardly Count!)
(*Takes the gun into the inn.*)

Evaristo (*to the Baron*). Do you propose to remain here all day?

Baron. Yes, I will take it easy at the inn.

Evaristo. You may count on me at dinner.

Baron. Excellent! I will expect you. (*To the Ladies.*)
Ladies, *au revoir*. (I will retire to allay suspicion.) (*To Coronato.*) I am going to my room. Prepare dinner for two to-day. (*Exit.*)

Coronato. As you command.

SCENE TWO

(Those present and MORACCHIO.)

Moracchio (*comes out of the house with gun and takes dog from Giannina*). Here I am, sir. Quite ready.

Evaristo. Let us go. (*To the Ladies as he takes his gun.*)
Ladies, if you will excuse me, I will try my luck with my gun.

Geltrude. I trust you will enjoy yourself.

Candida. Good sport and good luck.

Evaristo (*to Candida, busying himself with his gun and equipment*). Favoured by your good wishes, I am sure of good luck.

Candida (*to Geltrude*). How courteous Signor Evaristo is!

Geltrude. Yes, he is certainly gallant, he has polish. But trust no one, niece, whom you do not know through and through.

Candida. Why do you say that, aunt?

Geltrude. Because for some time past I have had good reason to say it.

Candida. Surely I have given you no grounds . . .

Geltrude. No, I make no complaint against you; I only warn you to be on your guard.

Candida. (Her warning comes too late! I am head over ears in love.)

Evaristo (to Moracchio). There! Everything is ready. Let us go. (*Saluting the Ladies.*) Once more, ladies, your most humble servant.

Geltrude (rising and curtseying). Your servant.

Candida. Your most humble servant. (*As she rises she brushes against the fan, which falls into the street.*)

Evaristo (picking up the fan). Oh!

Candida. It is nothing.

Geltrude. Pray don't trouble.

Evaristo. The fan is broken. I am grieved beyond measure.

Candida. Oh, it does not matter. It is quite an old fan.

Evaristo. But if it had not been for me . . .

Geltrude. Do not let that distress you.

Evaristo. Allow me the honour . . . (*about to take the fan into the house.*)

Geltrude. Pray don't trouble. Give it to my servant. (*Calls.*) Tognino!

Tognino (to Geltrude). Madam?

Geltrude. Take that fan.

Tognina (to Evaristo). By your leave, sir.

Evaristo. Since they will not permit me. . . . There, take it. (*Gives the fan to Tognino, who takes it into the villa.*)

Candida (to Geltrude). See how upset he is, and all because my fan is broken!

Geltrude. A gentleman of breeding could hardly act otherwise. (Yet I am convinced there's some passion behind it.)

SCENE THREE

(Those present, and TOGNINO, who comes on to the terrace and gives the Ladies the fan. They examine and try to adjust it.)

Evaristo. (I am much distressed that the fan should have been broken on my account. I will see if I can replace it.) (*Softly.*) Signora Susanna!

Susanna. Sir?

Evaristo. I wish to speak with you. Let us go into your shop.

Susanna (rising). At your service.

Evaristo. Moracchio!

Moracchio. Sir?

Evaristo. Go on ahead. Wait at the edge of the wood till I come. (*Goes into the shop with Susanna.*)

Moracchio. If he wastes any more time, we shall lose the birds and only bag the salad! (*Exit with dog.*)

Giannina (spinning). (Good riddance to my brother! I'm dying for a word with Crespino; but I don't want that plague of a Coronato hanging round. He's always after me, and I can't endure him.)

Count (reading). Ah, exquisite, exquisite, most exquisite! Signora Geltrude!

Crespino. What is it you find so exquisite, Count?

Count. Eh? What's that to you? How could you understand, ignoramus?

Crespino. (I'll wager I know a thing or two more than he does!) (*Bangs on his last.*)

Geltrude. What is your pleasure, Count?

Count. Ah, you are a lady of taste! If you could hear what I have just been reading! It is a masterpiece!

Geltrude. Is it something historical?

Count (contemptuously). Tcha!

Geltrude. Some philosophical treatise?

Count (as before). Pooh!

Geltrude. Some gem of poesy?

Count (as before). Foh!

Geltrude. Then what is it?

Count. A marvel, a miracle, translated from the French! A romance, commonly called a fable.

Crespino. (Curse me! A fable! What a marvel! What a miracle!) (*Bangs away.*)

Geltrude. Is it by Æsop?

Count. No.

Geltrude. Is it by M. de la Fontaine?

Count. I do not know the author—but that is of no account. Would you care to hear it?

Geltrude. I should be delighted.

Count. Attend! Oh, I have lost the place. I will find it . . . (*Scans the page.*)

Candida (to Geltrude). Do you, with your taste for literature, like listening to fables?

Geltrude. Why not? Wittily written, they can be both instructive and amusing.

Count. Ah, I have found it. Listen!

Crespino. (Curse it! he's going to read a fable!) (*Bangs loudly.*)

Count (to Crespino). So! hammering again!

Crespino (still banging, to the Count). Don't you want any heels on your shoes?

(*Timoteo begins pounding again in his mortar.*)

Count. And now this other plague sets up his pounding! (*To Timoteo.*) Will you have done?

Timoteo. I'm doing my work, sir. (*Pounds.*)

Count (to Geltrude). Listen! 'There was once a damsel of such rare beauty . . .'
(*To Timoteo.*) Be quiet! or go and pound elsewhere!

Timoteo. Excuse me, sir. I pay my rent, and I've nowhere else to go. (*Pounds.*)

Count. Oh, go to the devil, with your accursed mortar! It is impossible to read! It is unendurable! Signora Geltrude, I will come to you. Then you shall taste this morsel, this titbit, this delicacy! (*Taps his book and enters Geltrude's house.*)

Geltrude. Master Apothecary has gone a little too far. (*To Candida.*) We must go and receive the Count.

Candida. Pray go alone. You know that fables do not amuse me.

Geltrude. No matter, come! Courtesy demands it.

Candida (impatiently). Oh, this Count!

Geltrude. Niece, respect others if you would be respected yourself. Come!

Candida (getting up to go). Very well—since you insist.

SCENE FOUR

(Those present, with *EVARISTO* and *SUSANNA*, from the shop.)

Candida (watching from the back). What! Signor Evaristo still here? Not gone shooting? What can be the reason?

Susanna (to Evaristo). Come, don't complain. I assure you I have given you the fan at practically cost price.

Evaristo. (*Candida is gone.*) (*To Susanna.*) My complaint is that you have nothing better.

Susanna. I have nothing either better or worse. This is the only one. This is the last left in the shop.

Evaristo. Very well, I must rest content with this.

Susanna (laughing). I suppose you mean it for a present?

Evaristo. I certainly have not bought it for myself.

Susanna. For Signora Candida?

Evaristo. (*Signora Susanna is a little too curious.*) (*To Susanna.*) What makes you think that I mean to give it to Signora Candida?

Susanna. Because I saw her break hers.

Evaristo. Well, you are wrong. The fan is for some one else.

Susanna. All right, all right, give it to whom you please. I'm not the sort to pry into other people's affairs. (*Sits down and begins sewing.*)

Evaristo (approaching Giannina). (Perhaps not, but she'd like to know. However, she'll be off the scent this time.)

Candida. (*Secrets with the shopkeeper! What does it mean?*) (*Advances a little.*)

Evaristo (*whispering*). Giannina!

Giannina (*spinning*). Sir?

Evaristo. I want to ask a favour.

Giannina. What can I do for you?

Evaristo. I know that Signora Candida is fond of you.

Giannina. Yes, sir, she does me that honour.

Evaristo. She has told me so, seeing that I interest myself in your brother.

Giannina. Oh, what a life I lead! Here I am, with no father, no mother, under the thumb of a brother who is a brute, sir, a perfect brute! (*Spins viciously.*)

Evaristo. Listen to me.

Giannina (*spinning impudently*). Speak away. Spinning doesn't make me deaf.

Evaristo (*ironically*). (Her brother may be a handful, but I notice a family likeness!)

Susanna. (Can he have bought the fan for Giannina? I'll never believe it!)

(*Coronato and Crespino, curious to hear what Evaristo is saying to Giannina, crane their necks to listen.*)

Candida. (Conspiracies with the shopwoman! conspiracies with Giannina! I can't make it out!)

Evaristo (*to Giannina*). May I beg a favour?

Giannina. Haven't I said you may? Haven't I said I'm at your service? If my distaff upsets you, there it goes! (*Gets up and flings down distaff impatiently.*)

Evaristo. (I've half a mind not to say another word. But I need her help.)

Candida. (What's all this fuss about?)

Crespino. (Flinging down her distaff?) (*Gets up, shoe and hammer in hand, and edges nearer.*)

Coronato. (The discussion seems to be getting rather heated!) (*Gets up with his book and edges nearer.*)

Susanna (*watching*). (If he were giving her a present, she wouldn't fly into a tantrum.)

Giannina (*to Evaristo*). Well, I'm waiting. What do you want?

Evaristo. Come, be a good girl, Giannina!

Giannina. I wasn't aware that I was a bad one!

Evaristo. Do you know that Signora Candida has broken her fan?

Giannina (sourly). Yes, sir.

Evaristo. I have bought her another at the shop.

Giannina (as before). Well done!

Evaristo. But I don't want Signora Geltrude to know.

Giannina (as before). Naturally!

Evaristo. And I want you to give it to her secretly.

Giannina (as before). I can't oblige you.

Evaristo. (How ill-mannered she is!)

Candida. (He told me that he was going shooting, yet he still lingers.)

Crespino. (What wouldn't I give to hear!) (*Draws nearer, pretending to work.*)

Coronato. (I grow more curious every moment!) (*Draws nearer under cover of doing his accounts.*)

Evaristo (to Giannina). Why do you refuse me this favour?

Giannina. Because this sort of thing isn't in my line.

Evaristo. You put a wrong construction on the matter.

Signora Candida is much attached to you.

Giannina. True, but in a case like this . . .

Evaristo. She has told me that you desire to marry Crespino.

(*Turns and sees the two eavesdroppers.*) What are you doing here? What game are you up to?

Crespino (returning to his seat). I am working, sir.

Coronato (returning to his seat). Can't a man write and walk about at the same time?

Candida. (They have some important secret!)

Susanna. (What the devil do all the men see in that creature, to run after her so?)

Giannina. If that's all you have to say, I'll get on with my spinning. (*Takes up distaff.*)

Evaristo. Listen! Signora Candida has asked me to provide your dowry so that you may marry Crespino.

Giannina (changing her tone and throwing aside the distaff).

She asked you?

Evaristo. Yes, and I have pledged my word to do so.

Giannina. Where's the fan?

Evaristo. In my pocket.

Giannina. Give it here, give it here—but don't let any one see.

Evaristo. Here it is (gives it to her furtively).

Crespino (craning his neck). (He's giving her something!)

Coronato (craning his neck). (What has he given her?)

Susanna. (I'm blessed if he hasn't given her the fan!)

Candida. (Yes, yes, Evaristo is false to me! The Count was right!)

Evaristo (to *Giannina*). But I enjoin you to secrecy.

Giannina. Leave it to me. Make your mind easy.

Evaristo. Farewell!

Giannina. Good luck!

Evaristo. I am deeply obliged to you.

Giannina. And I to you. (Sits down and resumes her spinning.)

Evaristo (seeing *Candida* on the terrace as he turns to go). Ah, she is there again on the terrace! If I could drop her a hint! (Looks round cautiously and addresses her.) Signora *Candida*!

(*Candida* turns her back on him and goes off without answering.)

Evaristo. What is the meaning of this caprice? Is it a slight?

Impossible! I know that she loves me, and she knows beyond question that I adore her. But then . . . I have it! Her aunt was watching, and she did not wish to betray herself . . . Yes, yes, that's it—it could not be otherwise.

But I must put an end to this secrecy, I must speak to Signora *Geltrude*, and obtain from her the precious gift of her niece. (Exit.)

Giannina (spinning). Truly, I am obliged to Signora *Candida* for taking so much trouble about me. I can do no less for her. It is only right that we girls should help one another in our little affairs without spite.

Coronato (*gets up and addresses Giannina*). Great doings, great secrets with Signor Evaristo!

Giannina. What's that to do with you? Mind your own business!

Coronato. If it were not my business, I shouldn't interfere.

(*Crespino steals very quietly behind Coronato to listen.*)

Giannina. You are nothing to me, and you've no rights over me.

Coronato. If I am nothing to you now, I shall be something before long.

Giannina (*sharply*). Who says so?

Coronato. The only man who has the right to dispose of you. He has given me his oath, his promise.

Giannina. My brother, I suppose?

Coronato. Yes, your brother. And I shall tell him of all these secrets, these confidences, these presents . . .

Crespino (*coming between them*). Gently, gently, master innkeeper. What rights have you over this girl?

Coronato. I don't have to answer for that to you.

Crespino (*to Giannina*). And you—what's your intrigue with Signor Evaristo?

Giannina. Leave me alone, both of you! You drive me crazy!

Crespino (*to Giannina*). Once and for all, I will know!

Coronato. You will, will you? Go and command those you've a right to. Giannina is promised to me by her brother.

Crespino. And she is promised to me by herself. One word from the sister is worth more than a hundred from the brother.

Coronato. That remains to be seen.

Crespino (*to Giannina*). What did Signor Evaristo give you?

Giannina. Go to the devil!

Coronato. All right, all right! I saw him come out of the shop. Susanna will tell me. (*Runs over to Susanna.*)

Crespino. Could he have been buying some trinket? (*Runs over to Susanna.*)

Giannina. (They shan't get a hint out of me. I only hope Susanna . . .)

Coronato (to Susanna). Pray tell me, what did Signor Evaristo buy of you?

Susanna (laughing). A fan.

Coronato. Do you know what he gave Giannina?

Susanna (as before). Well, of course. The fan.

Giannina (rounding on Susanna). There's not a word of truth in it.

Susanna (to Giannina, getting up). What do you mean, not a word of truth?

Coronato (sharply to Giannina). Let me see that fan!

Crespino (giving Coronato a push). It's nothing to do with you. (To Giannina.) I want to see that fan!

(*Coronato shakes his fist at Crespino. Crespino shakes his fist at Coronato.*)

Giannina (to Susanna). It's your fault!

Susanna (disdainfully). My fault?

Giannina. You chatterbox!

Susanna (advancing threateningly). Chatterbox! Me!

Giannina. Be off, or I swear to heaven . . . (*brandishes the distaff*).

Susanna (retreating). I wouldn't soil my little finger on you!

Giannina. Soil?

Susanna. You're only a low peasant. Consort with your own kind! (*Runs into the shop. Giannina is about to follow her, but Crespino prevents her.*)

Giannina. Let me be!

Crespino (furiously). Show me the fan!

Giannina. I have no fan.

Coronato (to Giannina). Then what did Signor Evaristo give you?

Giannina (to Coronato). Oh, stop your impudence.

Coronato (advancing on her). I will know.

Crespino (pushing him back). And I say it's none of your business.

Giannina. Why can't you leave an honest girl alone! (*Goes towards her house.*)

Crespino (*following her up*). Answer me, *Giannina*!

Giannina (*at her door*). I shan't!

Coronato (*pushing Crespino aside*). Then answer me!

Giannina. Go to the devil! (*Goes into the house and slams the door in his face.*)

Coronato. This insult to me! (*Threatening Crespino*). This is your fault.

Crespino. You're a scoundrel!

Coronato (*still threatening him*). Don't make me lose my temper!

Crespino. Who's afraid of you?

Coronato (*furiously*). *Giannina* is mine!

Crespino. That she shall never be! And if she were, I swear to heaven . . .

Coronato. Threats, eh? Who do you think you're dealing with?

Crespino. I'm a respectable man, and all the world knows it.

Coronato. And what am I, pray?

Crespino. I can't say, I'm sure!

Coronato. An honest innkeeper.

Crespino. Honest!

Coronato. What! do you doubt it?

Crespino. It's not only me.

Coronato. Who, then?

Crespino. The whole village.

Coronato. Oho, my friend, they keep their gossip for others! X
I don't sell old leather for new!

Crespino. And I don't sell water for wine, or mutton for lamb—I don't go snaring cats by night to sell again as rabbits! X

Coronato (*raising his hand*). By heaven . . .

Crespino (*raising his hand*). Oho!

Coronato. Devil take you! (*Puts his hand to his pocket.*)

Crespino. Feeling in his pocket, eh? (*Runs to his bench for a weapon.*) C
from the
manuscript

Coronato. Where's my knife? (*Runs and picks up his bench.*)
 (*Crespino drops his tool and seizes the apothecary's chair. They
 prepare to fight.*)

SCENE FIVE

(Those present, with TIMOTEO, SCAVEZZO, LEMONADO, and
 the COUNT.)

(*Timoteo runs out of his shop, pestle in hand. Lemonado runs
 out of the café with a stick. Scavezzo runs out of the inn
 with a spit.*)

Count (*coming out of Geltrude's house to separate them*). Hold
 hold! peace, I command you! It is I, you dogs, I, the
 Count of Rocca Marina! Ho! you dogs! stop, I command
 you! (*Dissembling his fear.*)

Crespino (*to Coronato*). Well, if the Count says so . . .

Coronato. Yes, thank your lucky stars for the Count! But
 for him, I'd have broken every bone in your body!

Count. Peace, peace! have done! I will judge your quarrel.
 Let the rest retire. I am here. No one else is necessary.

Timoteo. Is any one hurt?

Count. No doubt it would delight you to find cracked skulls,
 broken legs, dislocated arms! It would afford you an
 opportunity to show off your skill!

Timoteo. I wish nobody any harm, but I am always glad to
 serve those who have need of me, if they are maimed,
 lamed, or broken. And in such circumstances I would
 above all, rejoice to serve your Excellency.

Count. You are a presumptuous rogue. I will have you
 removed.

Timoteo. Honest men are not to be removed so easily.

Count. Honest men, no! But ignorant, presumptuous quacks
 like yourself—one simply removes them.

Timoteo. I am amazed, sir, to hear you speak like that—you
 who, but for my pills, would be in your grave.

Count. Insolent knave!

Timoteo. And those pills have not yet been paid for! (*Exit*)

Coronato. (The Count might be of some use to me.)

Count. Well, what is it? What is the trouble? What is the cause of your quarrel?

Crespino. I'll tell you, sir. I'd tell it before the whole world. . . . I love Giannina. . . .

Coronato. And Giannina is promised to me!

Count (banteringly). Aha! I take you! A war of the affections! Two of Cupid's warriors! Two valorous rivals! Two suitors of fair Venus, the beautiful goddess of Case Nuove! Wu

Crespino. If you think I'm going to be made a fool of . . . (going).

Count (detaining him). No! Come here!

Coronato. Believe me, this is no laughing matter.

Count. I am sure of it. You are lovers, you are rivals. Jupiter! what an imbroglio! The very parallel of the fable I have been reading to Signora Geltrude. (*Producing book and reading.*) 'There was once a damsel of such rare beauty . . .'

Crespino. (Psha!) Excuse me . . .

Count. Where are you going? Come here!

Crespino. With your permission, I'm going to finish mending your shoes.

Count. Ah, yes, go! And see that they are done by tomorrow morning.

Coronato. And mind you don't mend them with old leather!

Crespino (to Coronato). If I want any *new* leather, I'll apply to you! +

Coronato. Thank the Lord I'm not a cobbler or a shoemaker . . .

Crespino. Never mind! I can always rely on you for a horse's hide—or a catskin! (*Exit.*) +

Coronato. (I shall murder that fellow one of these days!) +

Count. What's that he said about cats? Do you, then, feed us on cat?

Coronato. Sir, I'm an honest man, and that fellow's a scoundrel who does nothing but malign me.

Count. One of the consequences of passion, of rivalry! So you are in love with Giannina?

Coronato. Yes, sir, and I was about to beg your protection.

Count. My protection? (*Patronisingly.*) Well, well, we shall see. Are you certain that she returns your love?

Coronato. To tell you the truth, I suspect that she prefers that fellow.

Count. That's bad!

Coronato. But I have her brother's promise.

Count. Do not place too much reliance on that.

Coronato. His solemn promise.

Count. So far, so good, but (*emphatically*) you cannot coerce a lady.

Coronato. She's at her brother's disposal.

Count (warmly). Not at all! She is *not* at the brother's disposal.

Coronato. But, backed by *your* protection . . .

Count. My protection is a good thing, a very good thing. My protection is invaluable. My protection is all-powerful. But a gentleman, such as I am, does not decide for and dispose of the heart of a woman.

Coronato. But she's only a peasant.

Count. That's not the point. A woman is always a woman. I admit that there are grades, I admit that there are distinctions. But my maxim is, respect the sex.

Coronato. (I see! his protection's worthless!)

Count. What is the state of your cellar just now? Any special vintage on hand?

Coronato. The best, the rarest, the most exquisite!

Count. I must sample it. My own is very poor this year.

Coronato. (He sold his vineyard two years ago!)

Count. If yours is good, I will lay in a supply.


Coronato. (Thank you for nothing!)


Count. Do you hear?


Coronato. Yes, I hear.

Count. Tell me one thing. If I *were* to speak to this girl and win her over . . . ?

Coronato. A word from you might just turn the scales in my favour.

Count. After all, you deserve the preference. 


Coronato. It seems to me that, between myself and Crespino . . . 

Count. Oh, there's no comparison! A man like you, well set-up, well-spoken, respectable . . . 

Coronato. You are too kind!

Count. True, I respect all women, as I said. But on that very account, when I handle them in my own way, they do for me, I assure you, what they would do for no one else.


Coronato. That's exactly what I thought—but you dashed my hopes.

Count. I follow the example of the lawyers, who begin by making difficulties. My friend, you own a good inn and you can maintain a wife as she should be maintained. I will interest myself on your behalf. 

Coronato. I rely on your protection.

Count. It is yours. I accord it.

Coronato. If you would take the trouble to come and sample my wine . . .

Count. With all my heart! No trouble at all, in such an establishment as yours. 

Coronato. I await your pleasure.

Count. Excellent fellow! (*laying his hand on Coronato's shoulder*). Let us go. (*Exit.*)

Coronato. Two or three barrels of wine at most! . . . Not a bad investment! (*Exit.*)

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

(SUSANNA, alone, comes out of the shop and arranges her wares.)

Susanna. This village is a nice hole, and no mistake! Nothing sold to-day but one fan, and that practically given away . . . just to get rid of it. Those who have money to spend shop in the city. And those who haven't, yield no profit. I'm a fool to waste my time here—among yokels, too, with no sense of propriety or respect; they make no distinction between the mercer who sells them silk and the milkman who sells them eggs. My city education goes for nothing in the country. Every one on an equality, every one hail-fellow-well-met: Susanna, Giannina, Margherita, Lucia, the shopwoman, the goat-girl, the peasant-girl, all in one bundle of hay! They do pay a little more respect to the two ladies; but pooh! what a little!—next to nothing! Take that hussy Giannina—just because the gentry patronize her now and then, she gets her head turned. She's been given a fan, has she? What does a peasant-girl want with a fan? A fine figure she'll cut! Fanning herself this way . . . fanning herself that way . . . I wish her joy of it . . . It's enough to make one laugh—if it didn't make one furious! People brought up in polite society like me can't abide low company. (*Sits and works.*)

SCENE TWO

(SUSANNA, and CANDIDA from the villa.)

Candida. I shall not rest till I get to the bottom of this. I saw Evaristo come out of the shop and then go to Giannina; and that he gave her something I am convinced. I will see whether Susanna cannot enlighten me. My aunt was right: never trust any one you don't know through

and through. Alas, if he should prove faithless! My first—
my only love! (*Approaching Susanna as she speaks.*)

Susanna (*rising*). Oh, Signora Candida! your humble servant.

Candida. Good day, Signora Susanna. What pretty work have you in hand there?

Susanna. Oh, I am only running up a cap to pass the time.

Candida. For sale?

Susanna. For sale, but heaven knows when.

Candida. I may be wanting a nightcap myself.

Susanna. I have some already finished. Would you like to see them?

Candida. No, no, not now, some other time.

Susanna. Would you care to take a seat? (*offering her a chair*).

Candida. But you . . . ?

Susanna. Oh, I'll fetch another chair. (*Goes into shop and brings out a cane chair.*) Take this one, it's more comfortable.

Candida. Pray be seated also, and continue working. (*Seats herself.*)

Susanna. I'm glad you don't feel yourself above my company. (*Sits.*) That shows your good breeding. Well-bred people aren't above anything, whereas these yokels are as proud as Lucifer; and as for that Giannina . . .

Candida. Talking of Giannina, did you observe her when she was speaking with Signor Evaristo?

Susanna. Observe her? I should think I did!

Candida. They had quite a long chat together.

Susanna. And do you know what happened afterwards? Do you know about the rumpus?

Candida. I heard a lot of noise and quarrelling. I was told that Coronato and Crespino tried to fight.

Susanna. Just so, and all on account of that precious beauty.

Candida. But why?

Susanna. Jealous of each other, and jealous of Signor Evaristo.

Candida. Then, do you believe that Signor Evaristo is attracted to Giannina?

Susanna. I know nothing at all, it's not my way to meddle in other people's affairs, I never think ill of anybody; but if the innkeeper and the cobbler *are* jealous of him—no doubt they have their reasons!

Candida (*aside*). (Alas, I have my reasons too!)

Susanna. Pardon me! I trust that I have not been indiscreet!

Candida. In what way?

Susanna. I trust that you yourself have no affection for Signor Evaristo . . .

Candida. What! I? He is nothing to me. I am acquainted with him, because he comes occasionally to the house; but he is my aunt's friend.

Susanna. Then I will tell you the truth. (I don't think she can take it amiss.) I half thought that there was some sort of understanding between you and Signor Evaristo . . . Oh, quite as it should be, of course; but after his visit to me this morning, I was completely undeceived.

Candida. He visited you this morning?

Susanna. As I'm telling you, Signora . . . He came to buy a fan.

Candida (*anxiously*). He bought a fan?

Susanna. Just so; and as I had seen how yours had been broken, partly on Signor Evaristo's account, I said to myself at once: He is buying this for Signora Candida.

Candida. Then he did buy it for me?

Susanna. Oh no, Signora. I made so bold as to ask him if he was buying it for you. And as I live, he answered, although he was very much put out: Not at all, he said what have I to do with Signora Candida? It's for somebody else.

Candida. And what did he do with the fan?

Susanna. What did he do with it! He presented it to Giannina.

Candida (*agitated*). (All is lost! I am undone!)

Susanna (*observing her agitation*). Signora Candida!

Candida. (False! faithless! and for whom? A mere peasant-girl!)

Susanna (with concern). Signora Candida!

Candida. (The insult is past all bearing!)

Susanna. (Mercy! now I've done it!) Signora, compose yourself. There may be some mistake.

Candida. You believe he gave the fan to Giannina?

Susanna. Oh, as to that, I saw it with my own eyes.

Candida. And yet you say there may be some mistake?

Susanna. I don't know . . . I shouldn't like to be the cause of . . .

SCENE THREE

(Those present, and GELTRUDE at the door of the villa.)

Susanna (to *Candida*). Oh, here is your aunt.

Candida (to *Susanna*). For heaven's sake, tell her nothing!

Susanna. No fear of that. (And she said he was nothing to her! It's her own fault; why couldn't she tell me the truth?)

Geltrude. What are you doing here, niece?

(*Candida and Susanna rise.*)

Susanna. She is favouring me with her company for a little.

Candida. I came about a nightcap.

Susanna. Yes, that's so, she asked me for one. Pray don't be uneasy, she's quite safe with me. I am no go-between; she'll meet no one she shouldn't in my house.

Geltrude. Do not justify yourself before you are accused, Signora Susanna.

Susanna. Well, I've got my feelings, madam.

Geltrude. Why did you not tell me you needed a nightcap?

Candida. You were writing in your boudoir; I did not wish to disturb you.

Susanna. Will you see the cap? I'll go and fetch it. Pray be seated. (*Gives her chair to Geltrude, and goes into the shop.*)

Geltrude (*seating herself, to Candida*). Have you heard anything about this quarrel between the innkeeper and the shoemaker?

Candida. They say it's an affair of love and jealousy. (*Sits.*)

They say Giannina is the cause of it.

Geltrude. I am sorry to hear that. She is a good girl.

Candida. Pardon me, aunt, but after what I have heard about her, it would be better not to let her come to the house again.

Geltrude. Why, what have they been saying?

Candida. I will tell you later. Take my advice, ma'am, and receive her no more; it is better so.

Geltrude. Since she has always come to see you rather than me, I leave it to you to act as you please.

Candida. (The hussy! She won't have the face to show herself to me again!)

Susanna (returning). Here are the caps, madam. Look, choose, and please yourself.

(*All three busy themselves with the selection of the caps, and converse in undertones.*)

SCENE FOUR

(Those present, the COUNT and the BARON entering from the inn.)

Count. I am delighted that you have confided in me. Leave yourself in my hands, and fear nothing.

Baron. I know you to be a friend of Signora Geltrude.

Count. Friend? Hum! it's like this. She is a lady of some taste; I, for my part, am devoted to literature; therefore I can entertain myself better with her than with most. Moreover, she is a gentlewoman in reduced circumstances. Her husband left her this miserable villa with merely an acre or so of land, and if she is to keep the respect of the village she has need of my protection.

Baron. Long live Count Rocca Marina, protector of beautiful widows!

Count. What would you? In this world, one must be of some service.

Baron. Then you will really be so kind . . . ?

Count. Make yourself easy; I will speak to her, I will ask the hand of her niece for a gentleman who is my friend; and if I ask, I assure you, she will not dare, she will not have the audacity, to say no.

Baron. You will mention my name?

Count. To what end? Since it is I who ask.

Baron. But you are asking for me?

Count. For you.

Baron. And I suppose you know who I am?

Count. It goes without saying that I know who you are. It goes without saying that I know you, with your titles, your estates, your position. Ah, we of the old nobility know each other as a matter of course.

Baron. (Oh, how glad I should be if I could only get along without him!)

Count (*nudging him*). Ah, my dear colleague . . .

Baron. What is it?

Count. Signora Geltrude and her niece.

Baron. They are occupied. I do not think they have seen us.

Count. No, indeed! If Geltrude had seen me, she would have been in a flutter at once.

Baron. When will you speak to her?

Count. Now, if you wish.

Baron. I had better not be present. While you speak to her, I will have a few words with the apothecary.

Count. Why with the apothecary?

Baron. I need a little rhubarb for my digestion.

Count. Rhubarb? He will give you elder bark.

Baron. No, no, he won't. If it isn't good, I shan't take it. I leave myself in your hands.

Count. My dear colleague! (*Embraces him.*)

Baron. Farewell, my dear colleague. (Is there a bigger fool in the world?) (*Enters the apothecary's.*)

Count (*calling aloud*). Signora Geltrude!

Geltrude (*rising*). Pardon me, Count, I did not see you.

Count. One word, I beg.

Susanna. Say it here if you like. My shop is at your service.

Count. No, no, what I have to say is strictly confidential.

(*To Geltrude.*) Excuse me for troubling you, but pray come here.

Geltrude. In one moment. Allow me to pay for a cap I have selected, and then I shall be at your service. (*Takes out purse to pay Susanna and to gain time.*)

Count. What, pay on the nail! That is not one of my vices.

SCENE FIVE

(Those present, and *CORONATO* coming from the inn with *SCAVEZZO*, who carries a barrel of wine on his shoulder.)

Coronato. Excellency, here is your barrel of wine.

Count. And the other one?

Coronato. The other will follow this one. Where do you wish it to be delivered?

Count. At my mansion.

Coronato. To whom shall I deliver it?

Count. To my steward, if he is about.

Coronato. Your steward! Hm! And suppose he isn't about?

Count. Then deliver it to whoever is about.

Coronato. Very good. Forward!

Scavezzo. Isn't the Count going to give me something for myself?

Count (to Scavezzo). Mind you don't drink the wine, and mind you don't water it. (*To Coronato.*) Don't let him go by himself.

Coronato. No fear, no fear, I'm going with him. (*Exit.*)

Scavezzo. (Yes, yes, no fear! the master and I have doctored it already.) (*Exit.*)

(*Geltrude, having paid, approaches the Count. Susanna sits down to her work. Candida remains seated, whispering with Susanna.*)

Geltrude. At your service, Count. What is your will?

Count. In two words. Will you give me your niece?

Geltrude. Give? What do you mean by give?

Count. The deuce! Don't you understand? In marriage.

Geltrude. To you?

Count. Not to me, but to some one I know, some one I recommend.

Geltrude. Listen to me, Count. You know that my niece has lost her parents, and that, as she was the only child of my only brother, I have taken upon myself the office of a mother.

Count. All this, if you will allow me to say so, is beside the point.

Geltrude. Excuse me, let me come to the point.

Count. Well, what *is* the point?

Geltrude. Candida did not inherit from her father sufficient to allow her to marry in her own rank. A

Count. No matter, that does not come into the question.

Geltrude. But allow me to speak. My husband left me very well off. A

Count. That I know.

Geltrude. And I have no children . . .

Count (impatiently). And you will provide the dowry . . .

Geltrude (with some warmth). Yes, Count, when she marries the man she loves. A

Count. Oh! that, of course, is essential. But I have proposed the suitor, and whoever I propose she *will* love.

Geltrude. I am sure, Count, you could propose nobody undesirable; but I trust you will do me the honour to tell me who he is.

Count. One of my colleagues.

Geltrude. Colleague? What does that mean?

Count. A nobleman, like myself.

Geltrude. But, Count . . .

Count. Don't make difficulties.

Geltrude. Allow me to speak, if you please; if you do not please, I will spare you further trouble, and retire.

Count. Come, come, compose yourself. Speak! I will listen. I am always ready to oblige a lady. I will listen.

Geltrude. I will explain my view briefly. A title establishes the honour of a house, but not of an individual. And as I do not think my niece is ambitious, I will not have her sacrificed on the altar of vanity.

Count (banteringly). Ah, it's easy to see who has been reading fables!

Geltrude. My sentiments have been instilled neither by fables nor by romances. They were inspired by nature and developed by culture.

Count. Nature, or culture, or whatever you please. The suitor I propose is the Baron del Cedro.

Geltrude. The Baron in love with my niece?

Count. *Oui, madame.*

Geltrude. I know him, and have every respect for him.

Count. You see what a prize I offer you.

Geltrude. A gentleman of parts . . .

Count. And my colleague.

Geltrude. A little free with his tongue, but none the worse for that.

Count. Come, then, what is your answer?

Geltrude. Gently, gently, Count; matters of this kind are not decided in a moment. If the Baron will be so good as to speak to me himself . . .

Count. Pardon me. When I say a thing, there's no more to be said. I apply on his behalf, as he has begged, entreated, and implored me; and as I, in turn, now beg and entreat—no, not entreat—demand!

Geltrude. Let us suppose that the Baron is in earnest . . .

Count. Zounds! Let us suppose? It is a certainty. When I say a thing . . .

Geltrude. Very well, it is a certainty. The Baron desires. Your Excellency demands. It only remains to be seen if Candida consents.

Count. She will know nothing about it unless you tell her.

Geltrude (ironically). Believe me when I assure you that I shall tell her.

Count. There she is. Speak to her now.

Geltrude. I will speak to her at once.

Count. Go. I will await you here.

Geltrude (curtseying). By your leave. (If the Baron is in earnest, my niece's fortune is made. But I suspect that her heart is already engaged.) (*Goes towards the shop.*)

Count. Ah, I am irresistible! I can twist anybody round my little finger. (*Takes out his book, sits on the bench, and reads.*)

Geltrude. Candida, shall we walk a little? I have something to say to you.

Susanna. If you will honour my little garden, you will be quite undisturbed there.

Geltrude. Yes, that will do admirably, for I must return here at once. (*Goes into shop.*)

Candida. What can she have to tell me? I am too miserable to hope for any consolation. (*Goes into shop.*)

Count. It would be just like her to keep me waiting for an hour. Luckily I have this book to divert me. A wonderful thing, literature! A man with a good book in his hand is never alone. (*Reads to himself.*)

SCENE SIX

(Those present, and GIANNINA from her house.)

Giannina. There, dinner's ready; when that brute of a Moracchio comes back he'll have nothing to grumble at. No one is looking. Now is the time for me to take the fan to Signora Candida. If I can manage to give it her without her aunt being any the wiser, I will; if not, I'll wait for another opportunity. (*Goes towards the villa.*)

Count. Ah, there is Giannina. Here, girl, here!

Giannina (turning round). Sir?

Count (beckoning to her). One word.

Giannina (approaching reluctantly). (What a nuisance!)

Count. (I must not neglect Coronato. I have promised him my protection, and he deserves it.) (*Gets up and puts down his book.*)

Giannina. Here I am. What do you want?

Count. Where were you going?

Giannina (rudely). On my own business, sir.

Count. How dare you answer me like that? What audacity! What impudence!

Giannina. I speak the only way I know, as I'm accustomed to speak. I speak like that to everybody, and nobody has ever called me impudent before.

Count. You should make distinctions when you speak to people.

Giannina. Oh, I can't make distinctions. If you want anything, say so; if you only want to amuse yourself, I've no time for your Honour.

Count. For my Excellency!

Giannina. For your High-and-Mightiness, if you like!

Count. Come here.

Giannina. I am here.

Count. Do you want to get married?

Giannina. Yes, sir.

Count. Brava! Now I am pleased with you.

Giannina. Oh, what I have in my heart comes out of my mouth.

Count. Would you like me to find you a husband?

Giannina. No, sir.

Count. Why No?

Giannina. Why No? Because No! Because I can find a husband without your help.

Count. You don't require my protection?

Giannina. No, indeed—not a bit!

Count. Do you know what a power I am in this village?

Giannina. You may be able to do whatever you please in this village, but you can do nothing at all in my matrimonial affairs.

Count. Nothing at all?

Giannina (laughing softly). No, nothing, nothing at all!

Count. You are in love with Crespino.

Giannina. Well, he suits me all right.

Count. And you prefer him to our honest, our well-to-do our admirable Coronato?

Giannina. Oh, I'd prefer him to others besides Coronato.

Count. You would prefer him to others?

Giannina (*laughing and indicating the Count*). If you only knew to whom I'd prefer him!

Count. And to whom would you prefer him?

Giannina. What's the use? Don't insist on knowing.

Count. I won't. It would be just like you to say something impertinent.

Giannina. Any further orders?

Count. Come! I am your brother's protector; your brother has promised you to Coronato, and you ought to marry Coronato.

Giannina. Your Honour——

Count. Excellency.

Giannina (*mischievously*). Your Honourable Excellency is my brother's protector?

Count. That is so. I have given my pledge.

Giannina. And my brother has given his pledge to Coronato?

Count. Precisely.

Giannina. Oh, in that case . . .

Count. Well?

Giannina. Let my brother marry Coronato.

Count. I swear to heaven you shall not marry Crespino.

Giannina. No? Why?

Count. I will have him sent out of the village.

Giannina. I will go and find him, wherever he is.

Count. I will have him beaten.

Giannina. He may have his own ideas about that.

Count. I will have him killed.

Giannina. That *would* be a nuisance!

Count. What would you do if he were dead?

Giannina. I can't say.

Count. Would you take some one else?

Giannina. I might.

Count. Reckon him dead!

Giannina. Sir, I can neither read, write, nor reckon.

Count. Hussy!

Giannina. Anything else?

Count. Go to the devil!

Giannina. Show me the way.

Count. I swear to heaven, if you were not a woman . . .

Giannina. What would you do to me?

Count. Go away!

Giannina. I obey at once—yet you say I have no manners!

(*Goes towards the villa.*)

Count (contemptuously). Manners! manners! and she goes off without a single salutation.

Giannina. Oh, pardon! Your servant, your Honour!

Count (haughtily). Excellency!

Giannina. Excellency! (*Runs into the villa laughing.*)

Count (scornfully). *Rustica progenies nescit habere modum.* I don't know what to do. If she won't have Coronato, I can't compel her; it's not my fault. What's got into the fellow's head that he wants a wife who doesn't want him? Aren't there enough women in the world? I will find him another. Better than that one. He shall see, he shall see the effect of my protection.

SCENE SEVEN

(Those present, and GELTRUDE and CANDIDA from the shop.)

Count. Well, Signora Geltrude?

Geltrude. Count, my niece is a sensible and prudent girl.

Count. Well? To the point.

Geltrude. But I confess that she vexes me, Count.

Count. Excuse me, if you only knew what I have endured from a woman! . . . True, another woman . . . (but all women! . . .) Well, what says our prudent and sensible Candida?

Geltrude. Suppose the Baron . . .

Count. Suppose? A plague on your supposes!

Geltrude. Then admitting, conceding, granting, agreeing, as it pleases your Honour . . .

Count (between his teeth). (Excellency!)

Geltrude (*inquiringly*). Sir?

Count. Nothing, nothing. Go on.

Geltrude. My niece, provided the conditions are suitable, is willing to marry the Baron.

Count (*to Candida*). Brava, bravissima! (This time, at any rate, I've brought it off.)

Candida. (Yes, if only to avenge Evaristo's perfidy!)

Geltrude. (I did not believe for one moment that she would consent. I thought she was involved in another affair . . . but I was mistaken.)

SCENE EIGHT

(Those present, and GIANNINA on the terrace.)

Giannina. She isn't here, I can't find her anywhere. Oh, there she is!

Count. Then Signora Candida will marry the Baron del Cedro.

Giannina. (What do I hear? What will she reply?)

Geltrude (*to the Count*). She will, if the conditions . . .

Count (*to Candida*). What conditions do you impose?

Candida. None, sir, I will marry him in any case.

Count. Well said, Signora Candida, I am very pleased with you. (*Pluming himself*.) (Ah, when I take things in hand, see how magnificently they turn out!)

Giannina. (This is dreadful! Poor Signor Evaristo! ~~It is~~ useless for me to give her the fan now.) (*Exit.*)

Geltrude. (I deceived myself. I thought she was infatuated with Evaristo, and she loved the Baron all the time.)

Count. With your permission I will go and break the good news to my dear friend, my dear colleague, the Baron.

Geltrude. And where is the Baron?

Count. He awaits me at the apothecary's. One favour. Go indoors, and I will conduct him to you instantly.

Geltrude. What do you say, niece?

Candida (*to Geltrude*). Yes, let him speak to you.

Count (*to Candida*). And to you.

Candida. I am entirely in the hands of my aunt. (I shall die, but I shall die avenged.)

Count. I fly. Await us. We will attend on you . . . (To *Geltrude.*) As the hour is a little advanced, it would not be a bad notion to ask him to stay to dinner.

Geltrude. What! at the first visit?

Count. Oh, an idle scruple! He will accept gladly, I answer for it; and as an inducement, I will come to dinner too.
(*Goes into apothecary's.*)

Geltrude (to Candida). Let us go and prepare for them.

Candida (mournfully). Let us go.

Geltrude. What is the matter? You are doing this from your heart?

Candida. Yes, from my heart. (I have given my word, there is no help for it.)

Geltrude (going towards villa). (Poor child! I feel for her. In these cases one always feels a little overcome.)

X SCENE NINE

(Those present, and GIANNINA from the villa.)

Giannina. Oh, Signora Candida.

Candida (angrily). What are you doing here?

Giannina. I came to look for you.

Candida. Be off, and never dare to set foot in our house again!

Giannina. What! This affront to me?

Candida. What affront? You are a worthless baggage! I will put up with you no longer. (*Goes into villa.*)

Geltrude. (Really, she is a little too severe!)

Giannina. (I'm speechless!) Signora Geltrude . . .

Geltrude. I am sorry that you have been so mortified; but my niece is a girl of judgment, and if she has treated you harshly she must have her reasons.

Giannina (raising her voice). What reasons can she have? I'm amazed at her!

Geltrude. Come, come, remember your place, don't raise your voice.

Giannina. I'll have this out with her . . . (*Going.*)

Geltrude. No, no, not now! later will do.

Giannina (*about to enter*). I'll see her now, I tell you.

Geltrude (*barring the door*). Don't dare to pass this door!

SCENE TEN

(Those present, the COUNT and the BARON crossing from the apothecary's to the villa.)

Count (*to the Baron*). Come along! come along!

Giannina (*to Geltrude*). I'll force my way in!

Geltrude (*to Giannina*). Impertinent hussy! (*Goes in and shuts the door just as the Count and the Baron, whom she has not seen it, reach it.*)

(*Giannina retreats in a fury, raging. The Count stands speechless, staring at the door.*)

Baron. What! they shut the door in our faces? X

Count. In our faces? It is not possible!

Baron. Not possible? What has been done—not possible?

Giannina (*pacing up and down in a passion*). (This affront to me!)

Count (*to the Baron*). Let us knock, let us watch, let us listen.

Giannina. (If they go in, I'll go in too.)

Baron. No! Stop, I wish to know no more. I will not expose myself to fresh insults. A lot of use you have been to me! They've been making a fool of you, and it is your fault that I have been put in this ridiculous position. X

Count (*getting angry*). What do you mean by speaking to me like this?

Baron. I demand satisfaction.

Count. From whom?

Baron. From you!

Count. How?

Baron. At the sword's point!

Count. Swords? I haven't touched a sword since I came to this village twenty years ago!

Baron. Pistols, then!

Count. Agreed, pistols. I will go and fetch my pistols. (*Going.*)

Baron. No, stay. Here are two. One for you, one for me.

(*Takes them from his pocket.*)

Giannina. Pistols? Hi, hi! help! pistols! They're murdering each other! (*Runs into her house. The Count stands embarrassed.*)

SCENE ELEVEN

(Those present, and GELTRUDE on the terrace; later LEMONADO and TOGNINO.)

Geltrude. What is all this, gentlemen?

Count (to Geltrude). Why did you slam the door in our faces?

Geltrude. I? Pardon me! I am incapable of such rudeness to any one, least of all to you and to the Baron, who favours my niece with his attentions.

Count (to the Baron). Do you hear?

Baron. But, madam, just as we were about to present ourselves, the door was shut in our faces.

Geltrude. I assure you I did not see you. I only shut the door to keep out that wildcat, Giannina.

Giannina (putting her head out of her door, bursting with rage).

Who's a wildcat? (*Disappears again.*)

Count (at Giannina). Hold your tongue, you baggage!

Geltrude. With your kind permission I will give orders for your admittance. (*Exit.*)

Count (to Baron). Do you hear?

Baron. I say no more.

Count. What do you propose to do with those pistols?

Baron. Pray overlook the sensitiveness of a man of honour. (*Puts pistols in his pocket.*)

Count. And you would actually present yourself to the two ladies with pistols in your pocket?

Baron. I always carry them in the country for self-defence.

Count. But if they find out you have those pistols on you—you know what women are—they won't want to come near you.

Baron. You are right. I thank you for your warning. And as a token of good friendship, allow me to present them to you. (*Takes them out and presents them to the Count.*)

Count (*nervously*). A present—to me?

Baron. Yes. Pray don't refuse them.

Count. I accept them because they come from you. Are they loaded?

Baron. What a question! Do you imagine I carry unloaded pistols?

Count. One moment. Ho! waiter!

Lemonado (*coming out of the café*). What can I do for you?

Count. Take these pistols, and keep them till I send for them.

Lemonado (*taking pistols from Baron*). Very good, sir.

Count. Take care! They are loaded!

Lemonado (*flourishing pistols*). Oh, I know how to handle them!

Count (*nervously*). Now, now, don't play the fool!

Lemonado. (There's a brave Count for you!) (*Exit.*)

Count. I thank you. I shall always treasure them. (I'll sell them to-morrow.)

Tognino (*from the villa*). My mistress awaits you, gentlemen.

Count. Let us go.

Baron. Let us go.

Count. Ah, what do you say now? Am I, or am I not? Aha, dear colleague! We of the nobility! Our protection still counts for something, I think! (*They go up to the villa.*)

(*Giannina comes out of her house and tip-toes after them. The Count and the Baron are admitted by Tognino, who remains at the door. Giannina tries to enter, Tognino stops her.*)

Tognino. You've no business here.

Giannina. Excuse me, but I *have*.

Tognino. My orders are not to admit you. (*Goes in and shuts the door.*)

Giannina. If I have to bottle myself up any longer I shall burst with rage, I shall choke with fury. (*Coming forward.*) This affront to me! To a girl like me! (*Rages round the stage.*)

SCENE TWELVE

(GIANNINA, EVARISTO, gun on shoulder, and MORACCHIO, gun in hand, carrying game-bag, with dog on leash; later TOGNINO.)

Evaristo. Here, take my gun. Mind those partridges until I tell you what to do with them. Look after the dog. (*Seats himself outside the café, takes snuff, and makes himself comfortable.*)

Moracchio. Never fear, I'll look after everything. (*Approaching Giannina.*) Is dinner ready?

Giannina (*still furious*). Yes, it's ready!

Moracchio. What the devil's the matter now? You're always in a tantrum, and then you complain of *my* temper.

Giannina. Yes, I dare say. We're chips of the same block, there's no denying that.

Moracchio. Come, let's go and eat. It's high time.

Giannina. Very well, go along, I'll follow. (I want a word with Signor Evaristo.)

Moracchio. If you come, you come; if you don't, I can eat without you. (*Goes into the house.*)

Giannina. If I were to eat now, it would be poison to me!

Evaristo. (No one on the terrace! They are probably at dinner. I had better go to the inn. The Baron will be waiting for me.) (*Gets up and sees Giannina.*) Well, Giannina, have you nothing to tell me?

Giannina (*tartly*). Oh yes, sir, I've something to tell you.

Evaristo. Did you give her the fan?

Giannina. Here's your accursed fan!

Evaristo. What do you mean? Were you unable to present it?

Giannina. I have received a thousand insults, a thousand indignities! They drove me from the house like a dog.

Evaristo. Did Signora Geltrude catch you?

Giannina. Oh, it wasn't only Signora Geltrude. The biggest insult came from Signora Candida.

Evaristo. Why? What had you done to her?

Giannina. I'd done nothing to her, sir.

Evaristo. Did you tell her that you had a fan for her?

Giannina. How could I tell her when she gave me no time?

They drove me out like a thief!

Evaristo. But she must have had a reason.

Giannina. I only know I had done nothing whatever. And I'm certain, I'm positive, I received all this ill-treatment on your account.

Evaristo. On my account? From Signora Candida, who loves me so?

Giannina. Does Signora Candida love you so?

Evaristo. There's no doubt of it—I am sure of it.

Giannina (*sarcastically*). Oh yes, I assure you she loves you dearly, very very dearly!

Evaristo. You fill me with agitation!

Giannina. Go, go and seek your lovely one, your adored one.

Evaristo. And why should I not go?

Giannina. Because your place is taken.

Evaristo (*anxiously*). By whom?

Giannina. By the Baron del Cedro.

Evaristo (*amazed*). The Baron is in the house?

Giannina. Why shouldn't he be, seeing that he is betrothed to Signora Candida?

Evaristo. Giannina, you are dreaming, you are raving, you are talking nonsense.

Giannina. If you don't believe me, go and see for yourself.

You'll find out whether I'm telling the truth or not.

Evaristo. In Signora Geltrude's house . . .

Giannina. And Signora Candida's.

Evaristo. The Baron . . .

Giannina. Del Cedro.

Evaristo. Betrothed to Signora Candida . . . ?

Giannina. I saw it with these eyes, I heard it with these ears.

Evaristo. It can't be, it's impossible! you are talking rubbish!

Giannina (*scolding*). Well—go, look, hear for yourself. You'll see if I'm talking rubbish.

Evaristo. I won't lose a moment! I'll go at once! (*Runs to the villa and knocks.*)

Giannina. Poor fool, to believe in the love of a city girl!
They aren't like us, not they, those city girls!

(*Evaristo goes on knocking furiously. Tognino appears at the door.*)

Evaristo. Well?

Tognino. Excuse me, I'm to admit nobody.

Evaristo. Have you told them it is I?

Tognino. I have.

Evaristo. You told Signora Candida?

Tognino. I told Signora Candida.

Evaristo. And Signora Geltrude won't admit me?

Tognino. On the contrary, Signora Geltrude was willing to admit you, but Signora Candida objected.

Evaristo. Objected? By heaven, I will come in! (*Tries to force his way in. Tognino shuts the door in his face.*)

Giannina. There! what did I tell you?

Evaristo. I'm beside myself, I don't know where I am!
Shut the door in my face?

Giannina. Oh, there's nothing surprising in that. That's the fine way they treated me.

Evaristo. Is it possible that Candida has been deceiving me?

Giannina. What's done can't be doubted.

Evaristo. And yet I don't believe it, I can't believe it, I'll never believe it!

Giannina. You don't believe it?

Evaristo. No; there must be some mistake, some misunderstanding. I know Candida through and through. She's incapable of it.

Giannina. All right. Comfort yourself as you please. Hope on, if you like, and much good may it do you.

Evaristo. I absolutely must speak with Candida.

Giannina. But seeing she won't receive you . . .

Evaristo. No matter. There must be some reason behind it.
I will go into the café. One look from her, one word will

suffice. One sign from her will assure me whether it is to be life or death.

Giannina (*giving him the fan*). Take it!

SCENE THIRTEEN

(Those present, SCAVEZZO, who goes into the inn, and CORONATO, who remains behind to listen; later, CRESPINO.)

Evaristo. Take what?

Giannina. The fan.

Evaristo. Keep it. Don't bother me.

Giannina. You give the fan to me?

Evaristo. Yes, keep it, I give it to you. (I am beside myself!)

Giannina. Well, in that case, many thanks.

Coronato. Oho! now I know what the present is—a fan.

(*Goes into inn unobserved.*)

Evaristo. But suppose Candida won't let me see her—suppose she won't show herself at her window—suppose if I *do* see her she won't listen to me—suppose her aunt forbids her . . . Oh, I am in a whirl of agitation and confusion!

(*Crespino, with a bag of shoes, leather, etc., on his shoulder, enters, goes towards his shop, sees Evaristo and Giannina, and stops to listen.*)

Giannina. Dear Signor Evaristo, I pity you, I grieve for you.

Evaristo. Indeed, dear Giannina, I deserve your pity.

Giannina. Such a good, kind gentleman, too!

Evaristo. You know what's in my heart, you can testify to my love.

Crespino. (Hullo! I've come in the nick of time.)

Giannina. If I only knew how to comfort you!

Crespino. (Indeed!)

Evaristo. Well, at all costs I must put my fate to the test. I shall never forgive myself if I do not make some effort to clear my character. I go to the café, Giannina, I go, and I go trembling. Let your love and your good wishes go with me. (*Presses her hand, and goes into café.*)

Giannina. I can't help laughing at him, yet I can't help feeling sorry for him.

(Crespino puts down his bag, takes out the shoes, etc., puts them on the bench, and goes into shop without speaking.)

Giannina. Oh, there's Crespino. Glad to see you. Where have you been all this time?

Crespino. Can't you see? To buy leather, and fetch shoes for cobbling.

Giannina. You never do anything but cobble old shoes. I shouldn't like people to call you . . . Well, you know what spiteful tongues there are about.

Crespino (working). Ah, spiteful tongues can get more satisfaction out of you than out of me.

Giannina. Me? What can they say about me?

Crespino (working). Who cares if they do say I'm more of a cobbler than a shoemaker? It's enough for me to be a respectable man and earn my bread honestly.

Giannina. But I don't want to be called Madam Cobbler.

Crespino. When?

Giannina. When I'm your wife.

Crespino. H'm!

Giannina. H'm! Why h'm! What d'you mean with your h'm?

Crespino. I mean that Madam Giannina will be neither Madam Cobbler nor Madam Shoemaker. I mean that she has mighty fine ideas of herself.

Giannina. Are you mad, or have you been drinking this morning?

Crespino. I am not mad, and I have not been drinking; but I'm neither blind nor deaf.

Giannina (going up to him). What the devil do you mean? Speak out, if you want to be understood.

Crespino. You'd like me to speak out? All right, I *will* speak out! D'you think I didn't hear all your fine talk with Signor Evaristo?

Giannina. With Signor Evaristo?

Crespino (*mimicking Evaristo*). 'Indeed, dear Giannina . . . you know what's in my heart . . . you can testify to my love . . .'

Giannina (*laughing*). Idiot!

Crespino (*mimicking Giannina*). 'If only I knew how to comfort you!

Giannina (*as above*). Idiot!

Crespino (*mimicking Evaristo*). 'Dear Giannina, let your love and your good wishes go with me.'

Giannina (*as above*). Idiot! and again idiot!

Crespino. Idiot? Me?

Giannina. Yes, you, you idiot, you perfect idiot, you idiotic idiot!


Crespino. Devil take it, didn't I see for myself? Didn't I hear all Signor Evaristo's pretty speeches?

Giannina. Idiot!

Crespino. And all your pretty answers?

Giannina. Idiot!

Crespino (*threateningly*). Not so much 'idiot,' Giannina, or I may become one in earnest.

Giannina. Well, well! (*Seriously changing her tone.*) Do you really believe that Signor Evaristo cares for me? 


Crespino. I don't know, I'm sure.

Giannina. And that I'm donkey enough to care for him?

Crespino. I don't know, I'm sure.

Giannina. Come here, listen. (*Talking very fast.*) Signor Evaristo is in love with Signora Candida, and Signora Candida has thrown him over and wants to marry the Baron, and Signor Evaristo is in despair, and came to pour out his woes to me, and I sympathized with him for a joke, and he let me console him. Do you understand?

Crespino. Not a word.

Giannina. Do you believe me innocent? 

Crespino. Not a bit.

Giannina (*hastily*). Then go to the devil! Coronato's after me, Coronato wants me. My brother has promised me to him. The Count has urged his suit. I shall marry Coronato.

Crespino. Gently, gently. Don't fly into a passion. Can I be sure you were telling me the truth? That there's nothing between you and Signor Evaristo?

Giannina. And this is the man who mustn't be called idiot! (*Caressing him.*) My own dear Crespino, how I love you! My soul, my sweetheart, my betrothed!

Crespino (coaxingly). And what did Signor Evaristo give you?

Giannina. Nothing.

Crespino. Nothing? Really nothing?

Giannina. When I say nothing, I mean nothing. (He mustn't know about the fan, he'd be suspicious at once.)

Crespino. Can I be sure?

Giannina. Oh, goodness, stop pestering!

Crespino. You are really fond of me?

Giannina. Yes, I am really fond of you.

Crespino. Well, let's make it up. (*Takes her hand.*)

Giannina (laughing). Idiot!

Crespino (laughing). But why idiot?

Giannina. Because you *are* an idiot!

SCENE FOURTEEN

(Those present, and CORONATO from the inn.)

Coronato. At last I've found out about Giannina's present!

Giannina. What's that to do with you?

Crespino (to Coronato). Who gave her a present?

Coronato. Signor Evaristo.

Giannina. It isn't true!

Crespino. Not true?

Coronato (to Giannina). Yes, yes, and I know what the present is.

Giannina. Whatever it is, it's no business of yours. I love Crespino, I'm going to marry my darling Crespino!

Crespino (to Coronato). Well, what is the present?

Coronato. A fan.

Crespino (angrily to Giannina). A fan?

Giannina. (Curse the fellow!)

Crespino. Did he give you a fan?

Giannina. It isn't true.

Coronato. It's so true, that you have it still in your pocket.

Crespino. I want to see that fan.

Giannina. You shan't!

Coronato. I'll find the means to make her show it.

Giannina. You beast!

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Those present, and MORACCHIO from the house, with his napkin, munching.)

Moracchio. What's all this row?

Coronato. Your sister has been given a fan, she's got it in her pocket, and she denies having it.

Moracchio (sternly to Giannina). Come on, that fan!

Giannina. Let me be.

Moracchio (threateningly). Give me that fan, or by heaven . . . !

Giannina. Curse you! here it is. *(Pulls it out.)*

Crespino. Give it to me, give it to me! *(Tries to take it.)*

Coronato (furiously). I want it! *(Tries to take it.)*

Giannina. Let me alone, you devils.

Moracchio. Give it to me at once! I want it.

Giannina. No, young master. I'd sooner give it to Crespino.

Moracchio. Give it here, will you?

Giannina. To Crespino. *(Gives the fan to Crespino, and runs into the house.)*

Coronato. Give it here!

Moracchio. Give it here!

Crespino. It's not for you.

(They fall on Crespino; he runs away; they pursue him.)

SCENE SIXTEEN

(The COUNT on the terrace, TIMOTEO at his shop front; later, CRESPIANO, CORONATO, MORACCHIO, and the BARON.)

Count (calling excitedly). Ho! Signor Timoteo!

Timoteo. What do you want?

Count. Quick, quick! bring some restoratives, some cordials!
Signora Candida has been taken ill.

Timoteo. I'll come at once. (*Goes into shop.*)

Count. What the deuce did she see out of that window?
There must be noxious plants growing in the café garden.
(*Exit.*)

(*Crespino runs across the stage and goes off at the other side.*
Coronato and Moracchio run after him without speaking.)

Baron (coming out of the villa). Now then, hurry up, Signor
Timoteo!

Timoteo (coming from shop with a trayful of bottles). Here
I am, here I am!

Baron. Hurry up, you're wanted at once. (*Hastens into the
villa.*)

Timoteo. Coming, coming! (*about to enter.*)

(*Crespino, Coronato, and Moracchio run on as before from a
different entrance. They dash into Timoteo, upsetting him
and breaking all his bottles. Crespino falls and drops the
fan. Coronato seizes it and bears it off. Timoteo gets up
and returns to his shop.*)

Coronato (to Moracchio). Here it is, here it is, I've got it!

Moracchio. Well done. You stick to it. I'll make Giannina
own up who gave it to her. (*Goes into his house.*)

Coronato. And I'll show her who's got it! (*Goes into inn.*)

Crespino. Curses on them! They've lamed me for life. But
I'll show them! What a nuisance that Coronato got the
fan. I'd give six pairs of shoes if I could get it back, merely
for the pleasure of breaking it to bits . . . Break it to
bits? After all, why should I? Just because it was a
present to my sweetheart? What a fool I am! Giannina
is a good girl, I want her badly, and it doesn't do to be
too particular. (*Limps into his shop.*)

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

(Dumb show leading up to the entrance of the Count and the Baron. Crespino comes out of his shop with bread, cheese, a plate of food, and an empty jug. He sits down to dinner on his bench. Tognino comes out of the villa with a broom and runs into the apothecary's. Crespino begins eating his bread in silence. Coronato comes out of the inn with Scavezze, who is carrying on his shoulder a barrel similar to the one he carried to the Count's. Coronato passes in front of Crespino, looks at him and laughs. Crespino looks at Coronato and shakes his fist. Coronato crosses over laughing, going in the same direction as that in which he took the first barrel. Crespino keeps his eyes on Coronato, who goes off, and when he cannot see him any longer, resumes his meal. Tognino comes out of the apothecary's and begins to sweep up the glass of the broken bottles. Timoteo runs out of his shop with tray and bottles, hurries over to the villa, and enters. Tognino goes on sweeping. Crespino takes up his jug, tiptoes over to the inn, looking very woebegone, and goes in. Susanna comes out of her shop, arranges her wares, then sits down and begins to work. Tognino goes into the villa, shutting the door after him. Crespino comes out of the inn with his jug full of wine, chuckling over the fan, which he draws out gleefully from under his coat, so that the audience can see it. He goes over to his bench and puts the jug on the ground. Giannina comes out of her house, sits down, and begins to spin. Crespino sits down, takes out the fan, hides it underneath his leather apron with a smile, and continues his meal. Coronato, alone, returns by the way he went out, passes in front of Crespino and laughs. Crespino eats and laughs too. Coronato, on his way over to the inn, turns round and laughs at Crespino, again. Crespino goes on eating and laughing. Coronato, having reached the door of the inn, laughs for the last time

and goes in. Crespino takes out the fan, looks at it, laughs, puts it back, and goes on eating and drinking. This ends the dumb show.)

(The COUNT and the BARON come out of the villa.)

Count. No, my friend, believe me, you have no reason to commiserate yourself.

Baron. I assure you I have no reason to congratulate myself.

Count. If Signora Candida did come over faint it was a mere coincidence. You must be patient. You know how subject ladies are to the vapours, to sterile affections . . .

Baron. Sterile? You mean hysterical . . .

Count. Yes, hysterical, hysterical, if you like. In short, if she did not give you the warmest of receptions you must blame, not her, but her indisposition.

Baron. But she was not ill when we entered. It was only when she saw me that she retired to her room.

Count. Because she was beginning to feel indisposed.

Baron. But did you remark with what deep attention Signora Geltrude, as she came from her niece's chamber, was reading certain papers, apparently letters?

Count. She has a great deal to attend to. Newly arrived letters, no doubt.

Baron. No, they were old letters. I'll wager she had found them either on the table, or in Signora Candida's corsets.

Count. You are too suspicious, my dear colleague, too sensitive, too squeamish. Your imagination runs away with you.

Baron. I imagine only what may well be. I suspect some secret understanding between Signora Candida and Evaristo.

Count. Oh, nothing of the kind! If it were so, I should know. I know everything. Nothing goes on in the village that I do not know. And then, if what you say were true, do you think she would have accepted your proposal? That she would have dared to compromise a mediator of my standing?

Baron. May not that have been the very reason why she said yes against her will? And why, after reading those letters, was Signora Geltrude less cordial to me than before? In a way, she even seemed anxious for our departure.

Count. Listen to me. Our only possible cause of complaint against Signora Geltrude is that she did not ask us to stay to dinner.

Baron. I don't care a straw about that.

Count. I threw out several hints, but she showed not a gleam of intelligence.

Baron. Believe me, she was only too glad to get out of it.

Count. I am distressed on your account. Where do you dine to-day?

Baron. I have ordered dinner for two at the inn.

Count. For two?

Baron. I expect Evaristo, who has gone shooting.

Count. If you would care to dine with me . . .

Baron. With you?

Count. True, my mansion is a good half-mile away . . .

Baron. Thank you, but the dinner is already ordered. Ho, within there! Coronato!

SCENE TWO

(Those present, and CORONATO from the inn.)

Coronato. At your service.

Baron. Has Signor Evaristo returned?

Coronato. I have not seen him yet, sir. It's a pity. The dinner is ready, and now it is getting spoilt.

Count. It would be just like Evaristo to stay out shooting, and keep your dinner waiting till nightfall.

Baron. What shall I do? I promised to wait for him.

Count. Waiting is all very well up to a point. But, my dear friend, one should never wait for a social inferior. Civility, politeness, by all means, but, dear colleague, let us remember what is due to our position.

Baron. I am almost inclined to ask you to take his place.

Count. If you decide not to wait, and prefer not to eat alone, come home with me and take pot-luck.

Baron. No, my dear Count, do me the pleasure of dining with me. Let's to table, and if Evaristo *will* be off-hand, he must take the consequences.

Count (*complacently*). It will teach him manners.

Baron (*to Coronato*). Let dinner be served.

Coronato. At once, sir. (There won't be many leavings for the pot now!)

Baron. I will go and see what sort of dinner they are giving us. (*Goes into inn.*)

Count. Have you delivered the other barrel of wine!

Coronato. Yes, sir, I sent it.

Count. You sent it? Without going yourself? They may have been up to any mischief!

Coronato. It's all right, I went with my lad to the end of the road, and there we met your man . . .

Count. My steward?

Coronato. No, sir.

Count. My valet?

Coronato. No, sir.

Count. My lackey?

Coronato. No, sir.

Count. Who, then?

Coronato. That man of yours who sells your fruit and vegetables . . .

Count. What, that fellow!

Coronato. I followed your instructions to the letter. I met him, I showed him the barrel, and he went on with the lad.

Count. (The devil! That fellow never gets a taste of wine! He has probably drunk half the barrel.) (*About to enter.*)

Coronato. Excuse me . . .

Count (*curtly*). What is it?

Coronato. Have you spoken for me to Giannina?

Count. I have.

Coronato. What did she say?

Count (*embarrassed*). All right, all right.

Coronato. All right?

Count (*on the point of entering*). We'll discuss it later, we'll discuss it later.

Coronato. But at least tell me something.

Count. Come, come, I mustn't keep the Baron waiting.
(*Goes in.*)

Coronato. (It ought to be all right . . . When the Count takes a matter in hand he brings it off . . . sometimes.)
(*Affectionately*) Giannina!

(*Giannina spins without answering.*)

Coronato. At least allow me to say how d'you do.

Giannina (*spinning, without looking at him*). It would be more to the point if you gave me my fan.

Coronato. H'm! yes . . . (I'd quite forgotten that fan down in the cellar.) Yes, yes, we must have a talk about the fan. (I hope no one has taken it away.) (*Goes into inn. Crespino laughs aloud.*)

Susanna. You seem very pleased with yourself, Signor Crespino, laughing so heartily.

Crespino. I laugh because I have good reason to laugh.

Giannina. It's all very well for you to laugh, but I'm choking with fury.

Crespino. Fury? And why are you furious?

Giannina. Because Coronato has got my fan!

Crespino (*laughing*). Yes, Coronato's got your fan.

Giannina. And why are you laughing?

Crespino. I'm laughing because Coronato's got your fan.
(*Gets up, collects the remains of his dinner, and goes into his shop.*)

Giannina. Hyena!

Susanna (*working*). I should never have believed that my fan would pass through so many hands.

Giannina (*turning viciously*). Your fan?

Susanna. Yes, my fan. It came out of my shop.

Giannina. You were paid for it, I suppose?

Susanna. Naturally. I shouldn't have parted with it otherwise.

Giannina. And I expect you were paid twice what it was worth.

Susanna. That's not true! And even if it were true, what's that to you? It didn't cost *you* much, anyhow!

Giannina. How do you know what it cost me?

Susanna (drily). Oh, as to what it cost you, I know nothing, I'm sure . . . And nothing of the giver's obligations to you . . .

Giannina (jumping up). Obligations? What d'you mean by obligations? I'm surprised at you!

Susanna. Now, now, you needn't think you can frighten me.

Crespino (coming out of his shop). What's up now? Quarrelling and caterwauling as usual?

Giannina (sitting down and spinning). (For two pins I'd smash this distaff.)

Susanna. She does nothing but snap one's head off, and then mustn't be answered back.

Crespino. Angry again, *Giannina*? (*Sits down and works.*)

Giannina (spinning). Angry? I'm never angry.

Susanna (sarcastically). Oh, she's a perfect lamb, she never loses her temper.

Giannina (at Susanna). Except when I'm kicked, except when I'm insulted, except when I'm treated like dirt!

(*Susanna tosses her head and mutters to herself.*)

Crespino (working). Do you mean that *I* treat you like dirt?

Giannina (spinning viciously). I'm not talking of you.

Susanna (banteringly). No, she's not talking of you, she's talking of me.

Crespino. What a fuss about nothing! It's impossible to get a moment's peace in this square.

Giannina. Not with all these spiteful tongues wagging . . .

Crespino. Be quiet! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

Susanna. Insults everybody, and mustn't be answered back!

Giannina. I only say what I've good grounds for saying.

Susanna. Oh, I'd best hold my tongue and say nothing.

Giannina. It's certainly better to hold one's tongue than to talk nonsense.

Crespino. You *will* have the last word, won't you?

Giannina. Yes, even from the bottom of a well. ✂

(*Timoteo comes from the villa with tray and bottles.*)

Giannina. Take me if you like me; leave me if you don't.

Crespino. Hush, hush! every one'll hear you.

Timoteo. (I'll never set foot in that house again. Is it my fault if these waters don't bring her round? I can't give her what I haven't got. They expect to find all the refinements of the city in a village. And anyhow, what are your elixirs, your essences, your quintessences? Mere quackery! *These* are the cardinal medicines—water, mercury, and Peruvian Bark.) (*Goes into his shop.*)

Crespino (*to Giannina*). Some one must be ill at Signora Geltrude's.

Giannina (*contemptuously*). Yes, that precious pet of a Candida.

Susanna. Poor Signora Candida!

Crespino. What's the matter with her?

Giannina. How should I know what's the matter with her, you fool?

Susanna. Ah, *I* know what's the matter with Signora Candida.

Crespino (*to Susanna*). What?

Susanna (*pointedly*). And Giannina ought to know as well as I.

Giannina. I? What's it got to do with me?

Susanna. A good deal, seeing that you're the cause of her illness.

Giannina (*jumping up*). Me?

Susanna. There you go! there's no talking to you.

Crespino (*getting up*). I should very much like to know what all this trouble's about.

Giannina (*to Susanna*). You can't talk anything but dirt.

Susanna. Now, now, don't get so excited.

Crespino (*to Giannina*). Let her speak.

Giannina (*to Susanna*). What grounds have you for saying that?

Susanna. I shan't say another word.

Giannina. No, no, speak out!

Susanna. Now, Giannina, don't force me to speak.

Giannina. If you're an honest woman, speak!

Susanna. All right, then, I will!

Crespino. Hush, hush! here comes Signora Geltrude. Don't make a scene before her. (*Goes back to his work.*)

Giannina (aside, returning towards her house). She'll have to make good what she's said.

Susanna (aside, sitting down to her work). I'm to speak out, am I? All right, I'll speak out!

Crespino (sitting down to his work). (If I could only get to the bottom of this!)

SCENE THREE

(Those present, and GELTRUDE from the villa.)

Geltrude (gravely to Giannina). Tell me, has your brother returned?

Giannina (sulkily, still going towards her house). Yes, madam.

Geltrude. Has Signor Evaristo returned also?

Giannina. Yes, madam.

Geltrude. Do you know where Signor Evaristo is?

Giannina (viciously). No, I don't! Good day! (*Goes into house.*)

Geltrude. (What manners!) Crespino!

Crespino (getting up). Madam?

Geltrude. Do you know where Signor Evaristo is?

Crespino. No, madam, I'm afraid I don't.

Geltrude. Be so good as to see whether he is at the inn.

Crespino. I'll go at once. (*Goes into inn.*)

Susanna (in a whisper). Signora Geltrude.

Geltrude. What is it?

Susanna (getting up). One word.

Geltrude. Do you know anything of Signor Evaristo?

Susanna. Yes, madam, I should think I do! I've a fine tale to tell you.

Geltrude. Merciful heavens! I've a fine tale of my own! I have seen certain letters which have astonished me. Speak, enlighten me, I beg of you.

Susanna. But here, in public? Surrounded by tattling busy-bodies? Shall I come to your house?

Geltrude. I must see Signor Evaristo first.

Susanna. Or will you come to mine?

Geltrude. That would be better. But let us wait for Crespino.

Susanna. Here he is.

(*Crespino comes from the inn.*)

Geltrude. Well?

Crespino. He is not there, madam. They expected him to dinner and he hasn't turned up.

Geltrude. Yet he must have come back from his shooting.

Crespino. Oh, he's come back all right. I've seen him.

Geltrude. Then where can he be?

Susanna (*looking into café*). He's not in the café.

Crespino (*looking into apothecary's*). He's not in the apothecary's.

Geltrude. Look for him. The village is small enough. See if you can find him.

Crespino. I'll go at once.

Geltrude. If you find him, tell him that I wish to speak to him, and await him at Susanna's.

Crespino. At your service. (*Going.*)

Geltrude. Come, now, I am all impatience to hear you. (*Goes into the shop.*)

Susanna. Well, well, I've a fine tale to tell you. (*Goes in.*)

Crespino. There's something up with this Signor Evaristo. I'm glad I got hold of that fan. Coronato has found out that some one took it away . . . But he isn't likely to suspect me. Nobody will have told him I went there to buy wine. I went in the nick of time. Whoever would have thought of finding the fan on top of a barrel? What a stroke of luck, what a gift from the gods! Silly fool! to leave the fan on a barrel. While the lad was drawing the

wine, I took it and pocketed it. And then Coronato has the folly to ask me if I've seen it, if I know anything about it! As if I'd be idiot enough to tell him I took it! And then have him saying I'd gone on purpose to steal it . . . he would, he would, the knave . . . ! But where on earth shall I find Signor Evaristo? Not at the Count's—for he's licking his chops at the inn (*mimicks the Count eating*). Well, I'll look for him in the village; there are six or seven places where I might find him. I wish I knew what Susanna meant. But I'll get it out of her. If Giannina is guilty, if I find she's played me false, I'll . . . what'll I do? Throw her over? Perhaps. Perhaps not. I adore that girl! How's it all going to turn out? (*Going.*)

SCENE FOUR

(Those present, and LEMONADO from the café;
later CORONATO.)

Crespino (to Lemonado). Oh, do you know where Signor Evaristo is?

Lemonado. I? What do you take me for? His servant?

Crespino. Hoity-toity! mightn't he be in your café?

Lemonado (coming down). If he were, you'd see him there.

Crespino. Devil take you, Lemonado!

Lemonado. Who are you calling Lemonado?

Crespino. Just wait till you want your old shoes mended! (*Exit.*)

Lemonado. The rascal! as if I should tell him that Signor Evaristo is in our garden, when the poor gentleman has only just recovered his spirits, and oughtn't to be disturbed on any account. (*Calling.*) Ho, Master Innkeeper!

Coronato (at the door). What is it?

Lemonado. Signor Evaristo sends word to my Lord Baron not to wait dinner, as he is engaged and can't come.

Coronato. Tell him his message comes too late, as my Lord Baron is half through dinner already.

Lemonado. Very good. I'll tell him when I see him. (*Going.*)

Coronato. Hi! waiter!

Lemonado. Well?

Coronato. Have you by chance heard of any one finding a fan?

Lemonado. Not I.

Coronato. If you should, please let me know.

Lemonado. By all means. Have you lost one?

Coronato. Yes, I have. Some rogue has got hold of it, and those dolts in there can't even tell me who has been in for wine. But if I catch him . . . ! if I catch him . . . !

Do your best for me. (*Goes in.*)

Lemonado. I'll do what I can. (*Going.*)

SCENE FIVE

(Those present, and the COUNT at the window of the inn;
later GIANNINA.)

Count. Did I not hear the voice of Lemonado? (*Calling.*)

Ho! waiter!

Lemonado (turning round). Sir?

Count. Two cups of good coffee.

Lemonado. For whom, your Excellency?

Count. For me.

Lemonado. Both for you?

Count. One for me, and one for the Baron del Cedro.

Lemonado. Very good.

Count. Hurry up, and mind it's fresh made. (*Goes in.*)

Lemonado. Now that I know the Baron's there to pay, he shall have his coffee. (*Going.*)

Giannina (from her house, without her distaff). Hi, Lemonado!

Lemonado. Are you going to plague me with that nickname too?

Giannina. Come, come, don't get cross. It's not as if I'd called you turnip, or pumpkin, or melon, or crab-apple.

Lemonado. Is that the lot?

Giannina (coaxingly). Come here! Tell me—is Signor Evaristo still in there?

Lemonado. In where?

Giannina. In your café.

Lemonado. In our café.

Giannina (*getting irritable*). Yes, in your café!

Lemonado. There's the café. If he were there you'd see him there.

Giannina. Bah! what about the garden?

Lemonado. Bah! how do I know? (*Goes into café.*)

Giannina. Little beast! if I had my distaff here I'd break it over his head. And then they call me bad-tempered. Every one teases me, every one ill-treats me. My ladies here, that wasp there, Moracchio, Coronato, Crespino . . . ah! curse the lot of you!

SCENE SIX

(Those present, and *EVARISTO* running joyfully from the café; later *CORONATO*.)

Evaristo. Ah, there she is, there she is! (*To Giannina.*)
Success! success!

Giannina. Here, here, what's sent *you* off your head?

Evaristo. Oh, *Giannina*! I am the happiest, luckiest man in the world!

Giannina. Well, that's a comfort. Now, perhaps, you'll see that amends are made for all the insults I've had to put up with.

Evaristo. Yes, anything you like. Did you know, dear *Giannina*, that you were under suspicion? *Signora Candida* knew that I had given you the fan; she believed that I had bought it for you; she was jealous of me, she was jealous of you.

Giannina. Jealous of me?

Evaristo. Yes, actually!

Giannina (*imprecating the villa*). Fury take you!

Evaristo. She bestowed her hand on another out of anger, revenge, desperation. She caught sight of me, she swayed, she swooned. For awhile I was unable to see her. At last by good chance, by good fortune, her aunt left the house. *Candida* came down into the garden; I burst through the hedge, I leapt over the wall, I threw myself at her feet, I

wept, I implored, I protested, I conquered, she is mine, she is mine, there is no more to fear! (*Breathless with joy.*)

Giannina (mimicking him). I rejoice with you, I congratulate you, I felicitate you! She is yours, yours for ever! I am delighted, I am enraptured, I am overjoyed!

Evaristo. To seal my happiness, to render it complete, she bids me fulfil but one condition.

Giannina. And what is that condition?

Evaristo (as before). To clear myself entirely, to clear you at the same time, and to give her the satisfaction that is her due, it is essential that I should present her with the fan.

Giannina. Here's a pretty kettle of fish!

Evaristo (still excited). My honour, your honour, are in the balance. Should it appear that I had bought the fan for you, her worst suspicions would be confirmed. Be sensible, be kind. Give me back the fan!

Giannina (confused). But, sir . . . I no longer have the fan.

Evaristo. Come, come, be reasonable. I know I gave it to you, and I would not dream of asking for it back if I were not in this extremity. I will buy you another one, I will buy you a much better one; but for the love of heaven, give it back to me at once!

Giannina. But I tell you, sir, I no longer have it.

Evaristo (wildly). *Giannina,* my life and your reputation are at stake.

Giannina. I swear by my honour and by every oath in the world, I have not got that fan!

Evaristo (fiercely). Oh, heavens! what have you done with it, then?

Giannina. They found out I had the fan, they set on me like three mad dogs . . .

Evaristo (furiously). Who?

Giannina. My brother . . .

Evaristo. Moracchio! . . . (*Runs towards the house to call him.*)

Giannina. Stop, stop! Moracchio hasn't got it.

Evaristo (stamping his foot). Who has, then?

Giannina. I gave it to Crespino . . .

Evaristo. Hi! where are you? Crespino! (*Runs towards the shop.*)

Giannina. Come here, do! Listen . . .

Evaristo. I can't contain myself!

Giannina. Crespino hasn't got it any longer.

Evaristo. But who *has* got it? Who *has* got it? Quick!

Giannina. That knave Coronato.

Evaristo. Coronato? (*Running towards inn.*) Come here!
Coronato!

Coronato. Sir?

Evaristo. Give me that fan.

Coronato. What fan?

Giannina. The fan I had. It belongs to him.

Evaristo. Come, hurry up, there's no time to be lost!

Coronato. I am extremely sorry, sir, but . . .

Evaristo. Well?

Coronato. The fan is nowhere to be found.

Evaristo. Nowhere to be found?

Coronato. In a moment of abstraction I put it down on a barrel. I left it there, I went off, I came back, it was gone. Some one had taken it away.

Evaristo. Find it again.

Coronato. Where? I've searched high and low.

Evaristo. Ten, twenty, thirty guineas—would they help you to find it?

Coronato. If it's not there, it's not there.

Evaristo. This is the last straw!

Coronato. I'm sorry, but I don't see what's to be done. (*Exit.*)

Evaristo (to Giannina). It is you who are my ruin, my overthrow!

Giannina. I? What have I done?

SCENE SEVEN

(Those present, and CANDIDA on the terrace.)

Candida (calling). Signor Evaristo!

Evaristo. (It is she, it is she; I am undone!)

Giannina. (Devil take it! does he think the world's come to an end?)

Candida (*as before*). Signor Evaristo!

Evaristo. Ah, Candida, my sweetest, I am the unluckiest, the unhappiest man in the world.

Candida. I see. You cannot produce the fan.

Giannina. (She's guessed it first shot.)

Evaristo. (Everything conspires against me.) (*To Candida.*)

Yes, it is only too true. The fan is missing, and for the moment I can't lay my hands on it.

Candida. Oh, I know where it is.

Evaristo. Where? where? If you could give me some clue . . .

Giannina (*to Evaristo*). Who knows? I dare say some one has found it.

Evaristo (*to Giannina*). Don't interrupt!

Candida. The fan is in the possession of her to whom you gave it, and who will not give it back—and she is right.

Giannina (*to Candida*). That's not true!

Candida. Be quiet!

Evaristo. I swear on my honour . . .

Candida. Enough! My mind is made up. I am amazed that you should think less of me than of a rustic. (*Exit.*)

Giannina (*calling after her*). What do you mean by rustic?

Evaristo (*to Giannina*). As heaven is my witness, you are the author of my despair, my death!

Giannina. Tcha! tcha! Don't play the fool!

Evaristo. She has chosen her course. Very well, then! I will choose mine. I will lie in wait for my rival, I will fall on him with my sword; either that dog shall die, or I will; and all through you, through you!

Giannina. Oh, I'd better make myself scarce. I'm afraid he's going off his head. (*Tiptoes towards the house.*)

Evaristo. What is this? My heart is crushed with grief; I cannot breathe. My legs fail me, my eyes grow dizzy. Oh misery! who can help me now? (*Falls into one of the café chairs in a complete collapse.*)

Giannina (turning as he falls). What's the matter? what's the matter? The poor fellow's dying! he's dying! Help, everybody, help! here, Moracchio! waiter!

SCENE EIGHT

(Those present, LEMONADO with two cups of coffee for the inn, MORACCHIO from the house running to EVARISTO'S aid, CRESPINO and TIMOTEO; later the COUNT.)

Crespino (from the street). Aha! there's Signor Evaristo. What's up?

Giannina (to Lemonado). Water, water!

Crespino. Wine, wine! (*Runs into shop.*)

Lemonado. Give him some wine. I must take this coffee to the inn. (*Exit.*)

Moracchio. Courage, courage, Signor Evaristo! The hunt is up! the hunt is up!

Giannina. The hunt, indeed! He's in love. That's *his* trouble.

Timoteo (from his shop). What is it?

Moracchio. Here, here, Signor Timoteo.

Giannina. Come and help this poor gentleman.

Timoteo. What ails him?

Giannina. He has fainted.

Timoteo. We must bleed him.

Moracchio. Do you know how, master?

Timoteo. In emergencies one knows how to do anything. (*Goes into his shop.*)

Giannina. (Poor Signor Evaristo! he'll do for him entirely.)

Crespino (from his shop with a flagon of wine). Here we are.

This will bring him round. It's old wine, five years old.

Giannina. He seems to be reviving a little.

Crespino. Oh, this would bring the dead to life.

Moracchio. Courage, courage, pluck up heart.

Timoteo (from the apothecary's with bowl, bandages, and a razor). Here I am. Quick now! Strip him!

Moracchio. What are you going to do with that razor?

Timoteo. In emergencies it comes handier than a lancet.

Crespino. A razor?

Giannina. A razor?

Evaristo (*raising himself feebly*). Who wants to assassinate me with a razor?

Giannina. Signor Timoteo.

Timoteo. I'm a respectable man, I assassinate no one, and when a man's doing his best, it's nobody's place to blame him. (Next time they call me, let them call!) (*Goes into shop.*)

Moracchio. Come along with me, Signor Evaristo, and lie down on my bed.

Evaristo. Where you will.

Moracchio. Lean on my arm.

Evaristo. Would that my miserable life were at an end!
(*Walks, supported by Moracchio.*)

Giannina. (If he wants to die, he has only to call in the apothecary.)

Moracchio. Here we are at the door. In we go.

Evaristo. Kindness is wasted on one who desires only death.
(*Goes in.*)

Moracchio (*from the doorway*). *Giannina*, come and make Signor Evaristo's bed. (*Goes in. Giannina is about to follow.*)

Crespino (*calling*). *Giannina!*

Giannina. What is it?

Crespino. You seem very sorry for the gentleman.

Giannina. So I ought to be, seeing that you and I are the cause of all his trouble.

Crespino. I can't answer for you. But I? How do I come into it?

Giannina. Through that accursed fan. (*Goes in.*)

Crespino. Accursed fan! Fan! fan! I'm sick of the sound of the word. It's a good thing Coronato hasn't got it, anyhow. He's always putting a spoke in my wheel, and if I don't look out I shall end by losing *Giannina*. I'd better bury that fan somewhere. But suppose some one trod on it and broke it? Whatever I do, I don't want to get into trouble over it. I can see with half an eye which way the

wind's blowing, and I shouldn't like to lose what little I've got. (*Goes to his bench and takes out the fan.*)

(*Lemonado comes from the inn with tray.*)

Count (*from the inn*). Stop! come back! (*Takes a lump of sugar and puts it in his mouth.*) For my cold.

Lemonado. (*For your palate!*)

Count. What?

Lemonado. I say, it is good for the palate. (*Goes into café.*)

(*The Count struts up and down, obviously pleased with his good dinner.*)

Crespino. (*Shall I? Shall I? . . . Yes, that's the dodge.*)

(*Approaches with fan.*)

Count. Ah, good day to you, Crespino.

Crespino. Your Excellency's humble servant.

Count (*in a whisper*). Are my shoes mended?

Crespino. You shall have them to-morrow. (*Produces the fan.*)

Count. And what pretty trifle have you there?

Crespino. Something I found on the ground near the inn.

Count. Let me see.

Crespino. Here you are.

Count. Ah, a fan. Some passer-by must have dropped it.

And what are you going to do with this fan?

Crespino. I really don't know what to do with it.

Count. Do you wish to sell it?

Crespino. Sell it, eh? I shouldn't know what to ask for it.

Do you think it's valuable?

Count. I don't know. I can't say. There are figures painted on it; but a fan picked up in the country can't be worth much.

Crespino. I'd be pleased if it were worth *something*.

Count. So that you might sell it to advantage?

Crespino. No, indeed, your Excellency; so that I might have the pleasure of presenting it to your Excellency.

Count (*complacently*). To me? You would like to give it to me?

Crespino. But since it isn't good enough . . .

Count. No, no, it has its points, it's quite a nice little fan. Thank you, my good man. Should the occasion arise, count on my protection. (I will give it away. It will add to my lustre.)

Crespino. I only beg one favour of you.

Count. (There, I knew it! Fellows of this sort never give something for nothing.) What favour? Tell me.

Crespino. I beg you to let no one know that you had it from me.

Count. Is that all?

Crespino. That is all.

Count. (Well, well, that's moderate.) If that is all . . . but tell me, pray, why do you want no one to know that I had it from you? Did you, by chance, steal it?

Crespino. Excuse me, your Excellency, I'm not the sort . . .

Count. Then why don't you want it to be known that I had it from you? If you found it, and if it isn't claimed I can see no reason.

Crespino (laughing). Oh, there's reason enough.

Count. Well, what is it?

Crespino. I'll tell you. I have a sweetheart.

Count. I know it well—Giannina.

Crespino. And if Giannina knew that I had had this fan, and hadn't given it to her, she'd be vexed.

Count. You are right not to give it to her. This is no fan for a peasant-girl. (*Puts it in his pocket.*) Fear nothing. I shall not mention that it came from you. But tell me, how goes your affair with Giannina? Do you really wish to marry her?

Crespino. To tell you the truth . . . I confess my weakness . . . I really wish to marry her.

Count. In that case, fear nothing. She shall marry you to-day, if you like.

Crespino. Seriously?

Count. Do you realize who I am? Do you realize the value of my protection?

Crespino. But Coronato wants her too.

Count. Coronato? . . . Coronato is a fool. Does Giannina love you?

Crespino. Well enough!

Count. Very good, then. You are loved, Coronato is not; count on my protection.

Crespino. So far, so good. But there's her brother.

Count. Brother? What brother? If the sister is satisfied, what has it to do with the brother? Count on my protection.

Crespino. Then I may rely on your good offices?

Count. Quite so, on my protection.

Crespino. I'll go to finish mending your shoes.

Count. Don't talk so loud. I may be requiring a new pair.

Crespino. You shall have them.

Count. I shall pay for them, mind! You must not imagine . . . I do not sell my protection.

Crespino. Oh, but a pair of shoes!

Count. Go! go! back to your work!

Crespino. All right. (*Goes towards his bench.*)

(*The Count takes out the fan and examines it minutely.*)

Crespino. (Good Lord! I'd quite forgotten. Signora Geltrude sent me to look for Signor Evaristo. I found him here, and I never told him. What with his sickness . . . and the fan . . . it went clean out of my head. I'd go and tell him now, but Moracchio won't allow me to set foot in that house. I know! I'll find Signora Geltrude again, tell her that Signor Evaristo is in Giannina's house, and get her to send some one else.) (*Goes into Susanna's shop.*)

Count (*contemptuously*). Well! there it is—just a fan. What can it have cost? Who knows? Some seven or eight shillings. Had it been a better one, I could have given it to Signora Candida, who broke hers this morning. Yet why not? After all, it's not so bad!

Giannina (*at her window*). (I don't see Crespino. Where can he have got to?)

Count. These figures are poorly executed, but not ill-designed, I think.

Giannina. (What do I see? The fan in the hands of the Count? Quick, quick! I must go and wake Signor Evaristo.) (*Goes.*)

Count. Besides, no one ever refuses a gift. It will come in somehow.

SCENE NINE

(The COUNT and the BARON from the inn; later TOGNINO.)

Baron. You seem to have deserted me, my friend.

Count. I saw that you weren't in the mood to talk . . .

Baron. Yes, that is true . . . I still feel uneasy. . . . Tell me, do you think we might venture to revisit the ladies?

Count. Why not? A happy thought occurs to me. How would you like me to make you a present? A present which would ingratiate you with Signora Candida?

Baron. What is this present?

Count. You know she broke her fan this morning?

Baron. Yes, so I've been told.

Count. Well, here is a fan. Let us go and find her, and then do you present it to her with your own hands. (*Gives it to the Baron.*) Look, look at it, it's not so bad.

Baron. And you suggest . . .

Count. Precisely! That you should present it. I desire no credit for it myself. Let all the glory fall on you.

Baron. I will gladly avail myself of this opportunity. But allow me to ask what it cost you.

Count. Why do you wish to know what it cost me?

Baron. That I may recompense you.

Count. What an idea! You astonish me! Didn't you give me those pistols? . . .

Baron. I say no more. I accept your generosity. (*Examining fan.*) (Where the devil did he find this fan? I can't believe that he paid for it!)

Count. Well, what do you think of it? Is it not a pretty

trifle? Does it not come in the very nick of time? Ah, in affairs of this kind, I always know what will please. I am always provided. I have a room full of knick-knacks for ladies. Come, let us go! let us lose no time! (*Hastens to the villa and knocks.*)

Tognino (*on the terrace*). What can I do for you?

Count. Are the ladies disengaged?

Tognino. Signora Geltrude is not at home, and Signora Candida is resting in her room.

Count. As soon as she wakes, inform us.

Tognino. Very good, sir. (*Exit.*)

Count. Did you hear?

Baron. Well, we must wait. I have to send a letter to Milan; I will go and write it at the apothecary's. If you care to come with me . . .

Count. No, no, I don't like that fellow. Go and write your letter; I will remain here till the servant brings word.

Baron. Very well. I will come the moment you call.

Count. Count on me, and fear nothing.

Baron. (H'm! I count little on him, still less on the aunt, and least of all on the niece.) (*Goes into apothecary's.*)

Count. I will divert myself with my book, with my exquisite collection of miraculous fables. (*Takes out his book and sits.*)

SCENE TEN

(The COUNT and EVARISTO from GIANNINA'S house.)

Evaristo. (Ah, he is still there; I was afraid he might have gone. I can't think how I came to fall asleep in the midst of all my misery. Fatigue, I suppose . . . exhaustion . . . But the hope of recovering the fan has put new life into me . . .) Count, your devoted servant.

Count (*laughing over his book*). Your servant.

Evaristo. May I have a word with you?

Count (*as before*). I will attend to you directly.

Evaristo. (If he hasn't the fan in his hand, how can I contrive to introduce the subject?)

Count (gets up laughing, pockets the book, and comes forward.)

Here I am. What can I do for you?

Evaristo. Pardon me if I have disturbed you. (*Peering for the fan.*)

Count. No matter, no matter, I will finish my fable another time.

Evaristo (as before). I trust you won't think me importunate.

Count. What are you looking at? Have I a smut on me? (*Examines himself.*)

Evaristo. Excuse me—I was told that you had a fan.

Count. A fan? (*Disconcerted.*) That's true. Was it you who lost it?

Evaristo. Yes, Count, it was I.

Count. But there are plenty of fans in the world. How can you be sure that this was the one you lost?

Evaristo. If you will be good enough to let me see it . . .

Count. My dear fellow, I'm sorry, but you have come a little too late.

Evaristo. Why too late?

Count. The fan is no longer in my possession.

Evaristo (distractedly). No longer in your possession?

Count. No, I gave it to a . . . certain person.

Evaristo (excitedly). To what person?

Count. That is precisely what I will not tell you.

Evaristo. Count, I must know! I must have that fan! I insist on knowing who has it!

Count. I shall tell you nothing.

Evaristo (beside himself). By heaven, you shall tell me!

Count. What! Do you remember to whom you are speaking?

Evaristo (fiercely). I say, and I will maintain it: this is not the action of a gentleman.

Count. Do you know that I have a pair of loaded pistols?

Evaristo. Hang your pistols! My fan, sir!

Count. Fie, fie! all this pother for a bit of a fan, not worth more than five shillings.

Evaristo. Only I can judge its value. You don't know what

it has cost me. If I could get it back, I would give . . . yes, I would give fifty guineas!

Count. You would give fifty guineas?

Evaristo. Yes, on my honour. I would give fifty guineas to recover it.

Count. (The devil! It must have been painted by Titian or Raphael!)

Evaristo. Pray, Count, do me this kindness, this favour.

Count. I will see if it can be recovered, but it will be difficult.

Evaristo. If the person who has it will sell it for fifty guineas, give them to him by all means.

Count. If I had it, such a suggestion would offend me.

Evaristo. I believe you, I believe you. But perhaps the person who has it won't be offended.

Count. Oh, as to that, the person in question would be no less offended than myself, and perhaps . . . perhaps . . .

My friend, I assure you that I am extremely perplexed.

Evaristo. Listen, Count. Here is a gold snuff-box, which in weight alone is worth fifty-four guineas. The workmanship doubles its value, but that's nothing. To recover that fan I gladly offer it in exchange. Take it. (*Gives it him.*)

Count. Are there diamonds in that fan? I didn't notice any.

Evaristo. There are no diamonds, it is worth nothing; but to me it is priceless.

Count. Then I must see if I can gratify you.

Evaristo. I beg you, I entreat you, I shall be everlastingly indebted to you.

Count. Wait here. (This is rather a ticklish business!) I will do my utmost for you . . . And I am really to give the snuff-box in exchange?

Evaristo. Yes, give it, give it!

Count (going). Wait here. (*Turning.*) And should the person return the fan and refuse the snuff-box?

Evaristo. Sir, I have given the snuff-box to you—it is yours, make what use of it you please.

Count. Absolutely?

Evaristo. Absolutely.

Count. (After all, the Baron is a gentleman and my friend.)
Wait here. (If it were a question of fifty guineas I would reject them. But a gold snuff-box . . . yes, any gentleman could accept that.) (*Goes into apothecary's.*)

Evaristo. To clear myself in the eyes of my adored one, I would sacrifice my heart's blood!

SCENE ELEVEN

(*EVARISTO and CRESPINO from SUSANNA'S shop.*)

Crespino. (Ah, here he is!) I'm glad to see you, sir. Signora Geltrude desires to speak with your honour. She is waiting in Susanna's shop, and begs you to be good enough to step inside.

Evaristo. Tell Signora Geltrude that I have received her message, that I entreat her to wait a moment until I have seen some one with whom I have a pressing engagement, and that I will then obey her instantly.

Crespino. Very good. And how are you now? Better?

Evaristo. Heaven be praised, much better.

Crespino. I'm delighted to hear it. And Giannina—is she well too?

Evaristo. I believe so.

Crespino. She's a good girl, Giannina.

Evaristo. She is indeed; and loves you tenderly.

Crespino. I love her too, but . . .

Evaristo. But what?

Crespino. Certain things have come to my ears . . .

Evaristo. Certain things about me?

Crespino. To tell you the truth, sir, yes.

Evaristo. My friend, I am a man of honour, and your Giannina is as honest as the day.

Crespino. Oh yes, I believe she is. Spiteful tongues will wag.

(*Count comes out of the apothecary's.*)

Evaristo (to Crespino). Ah, go to Signora Geltrude, and say I will come at once.

Crespino. Yes, sir. (*Going.*) (I'm sure there's nothing wrong, I'm sure of it.) (*Passing the Count.*) Don't forget about Giannina.

Count. Count on my protection.

Crespino. This suspense keeps me on tenterhooks. (*Goes into Susanna's shop.*)

Evaristo. Well, Count?

Count. Here is the fan. (*Produces it.*)

Evaristo. Oh, joy! How shall I ever repay you? (*Takes it eagerly.*)

Count. See if it is yours.

Evaristo. Yes, it is mine beyond question.

Count. And the snuff-box?

Evaristo (*going*). Not another word. I am eternally bound to you. (*Runs into Susanna's shop.*)

Count. The pitfalls of ignorance! I thought it quite an ordinary fan, yet see what it is worth!—so much, that it is a fair exchange for a gold snuff-box like this. (*Takes snuff.*) Evaristo did not want it. The Baron . . . would not have wanted it. . . . True, he was a little vexed when I asked for the fan again; but when I said I would present it in his name, he was somewhat pacified. For three or four shillings I can buy one just like it.

Crespino (*returning from Susanna's shop*). Well, I've carried through that little job all right. It's worth one's while to serve Signora Geltrude—Ah, your Honour! so I have reason to hope?

Count. The best. This is one of my lucky days. Everything goes well with me.

Crespino. I hope my affair will too.

Count. We'll settle it at once. Ho, Giannina!

Giannina (*coming out of her house, angrily*). What do you want, sir? What is it now?

Count. Not so hasty, not so hot. I want to do you a good turn and get you married.

Giannina. I don't need any help from you.

Crespino (*to Count*). You hear?

Count (to Crespino). Wait. (*To Giannina.*) I wish you to get married as I dictate.

Giannina. I tell you I won't!

Count. And for a husband I shall give you—Crespino.

Giannina (delighted). Crespino?

Count (to Giannina). Ah, what do you say to that?

Giannina. Yes, sir, with all my heart and soul.

Count (to Crespino). You see the effect of my protection!

Crespino. Yes, sir, I see.

SCENE TWELVE

(Those present, and MORACCHIO from the house.)

Moracchio. What are you doing here?

Giannina. What's that to you?

Count. Giannina is going to get married under the auspices of my protection.

Moracchio. Yes, sir, that suits me all right. (*To Giannina.*) And you'll consent too, if not through love, through compulsion.

Giannina (calmly). Oh, I consent willingly.

Moracchio. So much the better for you.

Giannina. And to prove my willingness, I give my hand to—Crespino.

Moracchio (taken aback). Your Honour!

Count (complacently). Leave them alone.

Moracchio. But your Honour, was she not promised to Coronato?

SCENE THIRTEEN

(Those present, and CORONATO from the inn.)

Coronato. Who calls me?

Moracchio. Come here, look. The Count wants my sister to get married.

Coronato (furiously). Your Honour . . .

Count. As a gentleman I am just, as a protector I am reason-

able and humane. Giannina does not want you, and I cannot, should not, and will not use force.

Giannina. Yes, sir, I want Crespino though all the world be against me.

Coronato (to Moracchio). What do you say?

Moracchio (to Coronato). What do you say?

Coronato. I don't care a fig. Who doesn't want me doesn't deserve me.

Giannina. As the saying goes.

Count (to Crespino). Behold the effect of my protection!

Coronato. Your Honour, I've sent the other barrel of wine.

Count. Bring me the bill and I will pay you. (*As he speaks, draws forth the gold snuff-box and takes a pinch.*)

Coronato. (A gold snuff-box! He'll pay all right!)
(*Exit.*)

Moracchio (to Giannina). You've got your way, then.

Giannina. It looks like it.

Moracchio. If you regret it, that's your look-out.

Count. She will never regret it; she is under my protection.

Moracchio. Give me bread, not protection. (*Goes into his house.*)

Count. And when shall we celebrate the nuptials?

Crespino. Soon.

Giannina. At once.

SCENE FOURTEEN

(Those present, and the BARON from the apothecary's.)

Baron. Well, Count, have you seen Signora Candida? Have you given her the fan? Why did you not wish me to have the pleasure of presenting it to her myself?

Giannina. (What! Hasn't Signor Evaristo got it?)

Count. I have not yet seen Signora Candida; and as to the fan, I have other fans, and I propose to choose her a better one. Ah, here is Signora Geltrude.

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Those present, GELTRUDE, EVARISTO, and SUSANNA, all three from SUSANNA'S shop.)

Geltrude (to Susanna). Oblige me by asking my niece to come down. Tell her I have something to say to her here.

Susanna. At your service. (*Goes to villa, knocks, and is admitted.*)

Geltrude (aside to Evaristo). I do not wish the Count and the Baron to come to the house. In the circumstances it is better to talk here.

Count. Signora Geltrude, the Baron and I were on the point of visiting you.

Geltrude. I am obliged to you. But it is so pleasant out here just now, let us enjoy the air a little.

Baron (gravely). Welcome back, Signor Evaristo.

Evaristo. Your servant.

LAST SCENE

(Those present, CANDIDA and SUSANNA from the villa.)

Candida. What does my aunt wish of me?

Geltrude. Let us take a little turn.

Candida. (Ah, there he is, my faithless Evaristo!)

Geltrude (to Candida). But why have you not brought your fan?

Candida. Do you not remember that I broke it this morning?

Geltrude. Ah, yes, that's true; if only we could find another!

Baron (aside to Count, nudging him). Now is the time to present it.

Count (aside to Baron). No! not in public! no!

Geltrude. Signor Evaristo, have you a fan by any chance?

Evaristo. Here, at your service. (*Shows it to Geltrude, but does not give it to her. Candida turns away disdainfully.*)

Baron (aside to Count). Your fan, your fan!

Count (aside to Baron). Deuce take it! can't you be quiet?

Baron (to Count). Come, out with it!

Count (to Baron). No, not now, not now.

Geltrude. Niece, will you not accept this favour from Signor Evaristo?

Candida. No, madam, excuse me; I do not need it.

Count (to Baron). You see, she won't accept it!

Baron (to Count). Give me yours, give it to me!

Count (to Baron). Do you want to start a quarrel?

Geltrude. And will you kindly explain why you refuse that fan?

Candida (to Geltrude, bitterly). Because it is not mine, because it was not meant for me. And because to accept it would be as little becoming to your dignity as to mine.

Geltrude. Signor Evaristo, it is for you to clear yourself.

Evaristo. I will do so, if I am permitted.

Candida. By your leave. (*Going*.)

Geltrude. Stay here, I command you. (*Candida stays*.)

Baron (to Count). What's the meaning of all this?

Count (to Baron). I've no idea.

Evaristo. Signora Susanna, do you recognize this fan?

Susanna. Yes, sir, it is the one which you bought from me this morning, and which I rashly concluded you had bought for Giannina.

Giannina (to Susanna). That's more like it! rashly concluded!

Susanna. Yes, I confess my error, and may you learn by my example to respect the truth. And anyhow, I had some reason on my side, seeing that Signor Evaristo gave it to you.

Evaristo (to Giannina). Why did I give you this fan?

Giannina. That I might give it to Signora Candida; but when I tried to do so, she turned me off and wouldn't let me speak. Then I wanted to give it back to you, you wouldn't take it, and I gave it to Crespino.

Crespino. And I fell down and Coronato got it.

Evaristo. Where is Coronato? How did it pass out of Coronato's hands?

Crespino. Hush! don't call him. As he isn't here I will tell you the truth. Feeling very sore, I went to the inn to get some wine; I happened to find it, and I took it away.

Evaristo. And what did you do with it?

Crespino. I presented it to the Count.

Count. And I presented it to the Baron.

Baron (scornfully to the Count). And then took it back again.

Count. In order to restore it to the hands of Signor Evaristo.

Evaristo. Who now delivers it into the hands of Signora Candida.

(Candida makes a curtsey, takes the fan, and smiles contentedly.)

Baron. What's all this play-acting? What's all this rigmarole?
(To Count.) Have I been made a fool of all through you.

Count. I swear to heaven, I swear to heaven, Signor Evaristo . . .

Evaristo. There, there, Count, calm yourself. Are we not friends? Give me a pinch of snuff.

Count. Ah, you know me! When people take me the right way, I can't be angry for long.

Baron. If you can't be angry, I can.

Geltrude. Baron . . .

Baron (to Geltrude). And you, madam, have you been making game of me too?

Geltrude. Excuse me, sir, how little you know me. I have failed in my obligations to nobody. I listened to your proposals, my niece accepted them, and I gladly gave my consent.

Count (to Baron). Do you hear? Because I had put in a word for you.

Baron (to Candida). And you, madam, why did you lead me on? Why did you deceive me?

Candida. I ask your pardon, sir. I was torn by two conflicting passions. Revenge would have made me yours, love restores me to Evaristo.

Count. Ah, that was beyond my control.

Evaristo. And if you had been a less zealous lover, and a more faithful friend, you would not now be in this plight.

Baron. Yes, that is true. I confess my passion, I condemn

my weakness. But I have nothing but contempt for the friendship and the conduct of the Count. (*Bows and exit.*)

Count. Pooh! it is nothing. We are friends. He's merely joking. We are colleagues. We understand each other.

Come, to the weddings! the nuptials!

Geltrude. Let us go in. May everything conclude in general satisfaction.

(*Candida fans herself.*)

Geltrude (to Candida). You are happy at last with your long-sighed-for fan?

Candida. I am too happy for words.

Giannina. What a fan! it has turned all our heads from highest to lowest.

Candida. Does this fan come from Paris?

Susanna. Guaranteed from Paris.

Geltrude. Come, I invite you all to supper. (*To the players.*)

We will drink to the success of the man who made the fan, and offer our humble thanks to those with whom we have had the honour to enjoy it.

NOTES

‘MINE HOSTESS.’ In his Memoirs, Goldoni says: ‘Seeing that the leading lady (the manager’s wife) was incapable of appearing, and that the Carnival was about to begin, I wrote a comedy for the Soubrette. By Christmas, Madame Medebac contrived to be up and well, but when she found that “Mine Hostess”—a new piece written for Corallina—was billed for the morrow, she went back to bed in convulsions of a new kind, during which she consigned her mother, husband, relatives, and servants to the devil.

‘On the 26th of December we opened with “Mine Hostess.” . . . The piece had a brilliant success—at least double as great as that of anything which I had written in this style where the interest is kept up by artifice. That Mirandolina’s project, devices, and triumph should pass within twenty-four hours would not seem plausible, perhaps, to any one until he had read the play. . . .

‘After the jealousy which Corallina’s advance had caused within the soul of Madame Medebac, this last piece seemed likely to bring her to the grave; but as her vapours were of a peculiar kind, she arose from her bed two days later and demanded that the run of “Mine Hostess” should be cut short and that “Pamela” should be put on instead. The public did not relish this, but the manager felt that he could not oppose the wishes of his wife. So “Pamela” reappeared after the fourth performance of this new and fortunate piece. . . . As for me, I said nothing. They were squabbling over two of my daughters, and I was the tender father of the one as of the other.’

Elsewhere he says that when he had finished the second act he did not know what he should do in the third. It is in this act, however, that we find the Ironing scene—the most famous scene of this his most famous play.

At the time of Goethe’s second residence at Rome (e.g. 1788) men played women’s parts in all theatres within Papal

territory, excepting those at Bologna. Goethe defends the practice, maintaining that a man-player presents not an individual but an essence of the many women whom he has studied. Of 'Mine Hostess' itself he says: '. . . The concluding scenes, represented by a lady, will always give offence. The expression of that invincible coldness, of that sweet feeling of revenge, of that arrogant spiteful pleasure will, when manifested before us in immediate reality, excite our indignation. . . . I accordingly repeat that people here (at Rome, where the part was done by a man) had the pleasure of seeing not the thing itself but an imitation, of being entertained not by nature but by art, of contemplating not an individuality but a result.'—(Goethe's 'Travels in Italy.')

'THE GOOD GIRL.' I had hoped to include in this volume a version of 'The Chioggian Brawls,' an amazingly vivid picture of life among the fisherfolk of a Venetian suburb, but on account of its dense dialect I judged it to be untranslatable; for to use ordinary English would be to make wild peasants talk like gentlefolk, and to use any English dialect would be like mooring gondolas at Hull. I chose 'The Good Girl' as substitute because, though it is largely in Venetian dialect, the speech of its gondoliers, who were accustomed to the life of a great city, can be rendered into English without destroying the essence of the play.

Goldoni says of it: 'In this comedy there are scenes of life among the Venetian gondoliers drawn from nature and really amusing to those who are acquainted with the language and the customs of my country. I wanted to make my peace with a class of servants who deserve some attention and who were displeased with me.

'At Venice (during the Carnival) the gondoliers are able to witness the festivities, if the pit is not full, but they could not get in for my comedies. They had to await their masters, either in the street or in their gondolas; and I myself have heard them giving me the most absurd and amusing names. I managed to secure them places in the corners of the hall.

They were delighted to see themselves portrayed, and I had straightway become their friend.'

'THE IMPRESARIO FROM SMYRNA.' This play and 'The Good Girl' have never been put into English until now, and they are not easy to come by even in Italian editions. Goldoni says little about 'The Impresario,' except to tell us that it was a great success, and that he first wrote it in verse.

Apostolo Zeno, Pariati and (of course) Metastasio—in whose works Maccario, in Act Five, says that he shall look for inspiration—were celebrated writers of libretti. Goldoni, speaking of Zeno and Metastasio, says that 'Italy owes the reform of opera to these two illustrious writers.'

'THE FAN' in its present form was first produced at Venice on February the 4th, 1765. It is, however, an Italian redaction of 'l'Éventail,' a comedy (by Goldoni), which was produced in Paris on May the 27th, 1763. No trace of the French version exists, but Goldoni refers to it, in a letter of April the 18th, as follows:

'I have been thinking out a new kind of comedy, in the hope of turning these actors to advantage. They do not learn set scenes, nor present long scenes that are carefully designed; and I have therefore made a comedy of many short and piquant scenes, enlivened by perpetual action and by continuous movement, so that the actors have merely to present actions rather than words. This will require a great many rehearsals on the stage itself—and much patience and endurance—but I want to see if I can make a hit with this new method.'

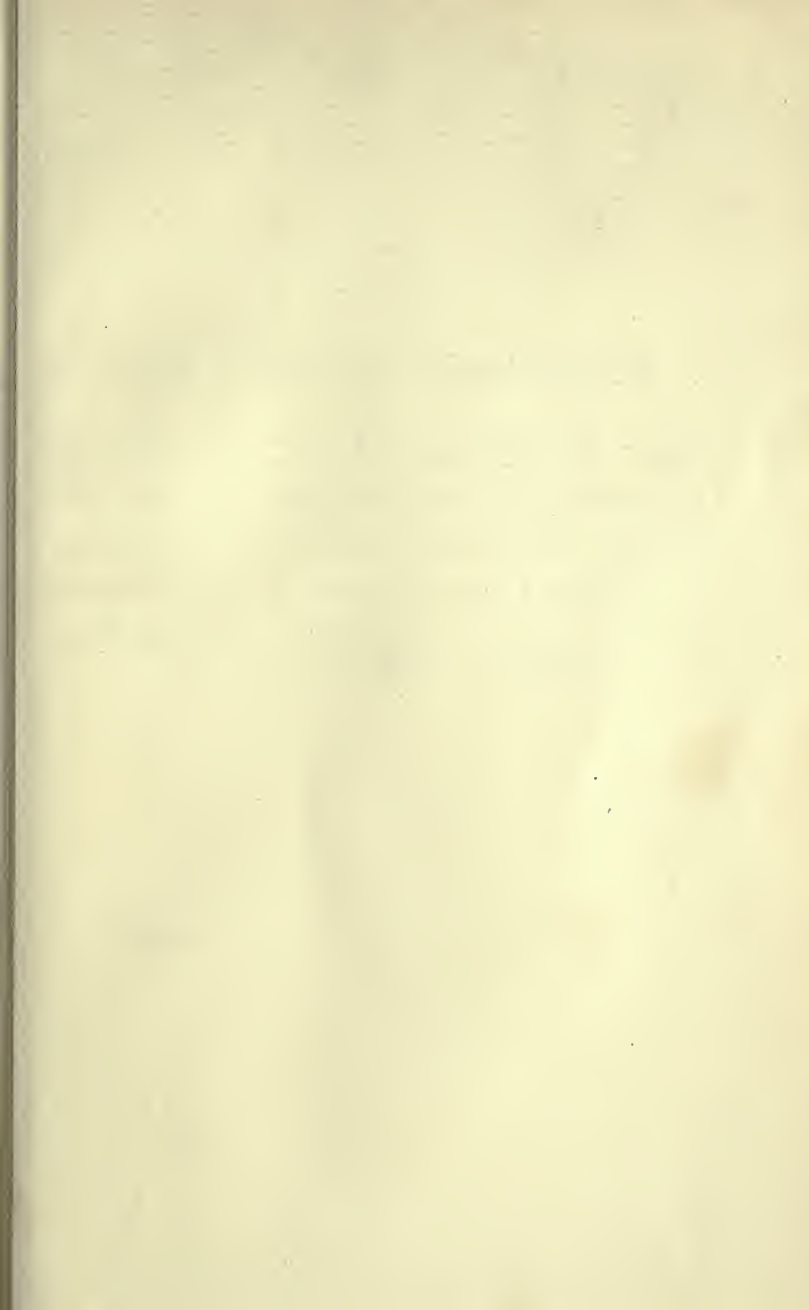
On July the 13th he writes to the same correspondent:

'It has not made the impression that I anticipated. It was too intricate for the skill of these comedians.'

The editor of a recent Italian edition adds that, although it was a great success in Venice, it had not so much good fortune in the theatre as other and less ingenious comedies

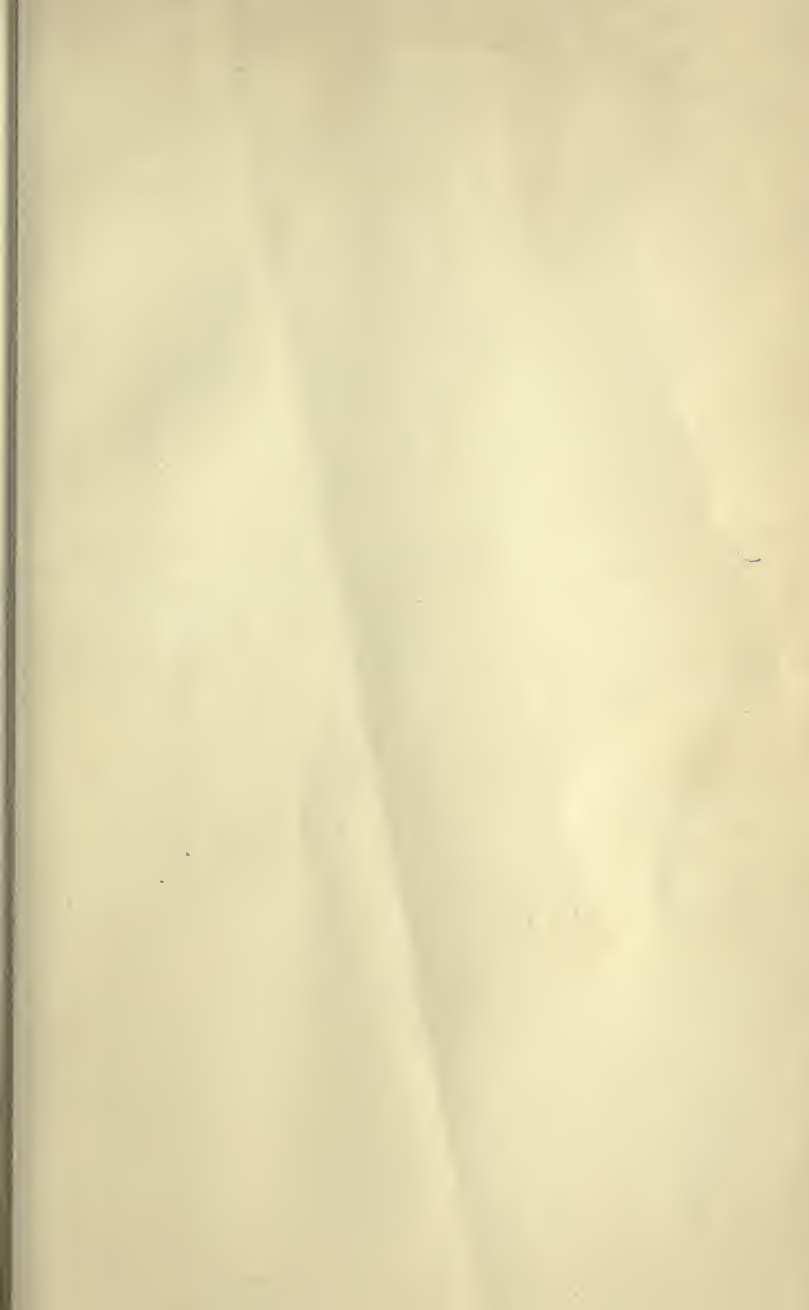
by Goldoni. He thinks that this was due to the number of rehearsals which it requires and to the absence of any outstanding part among the *dramatis personæ*.

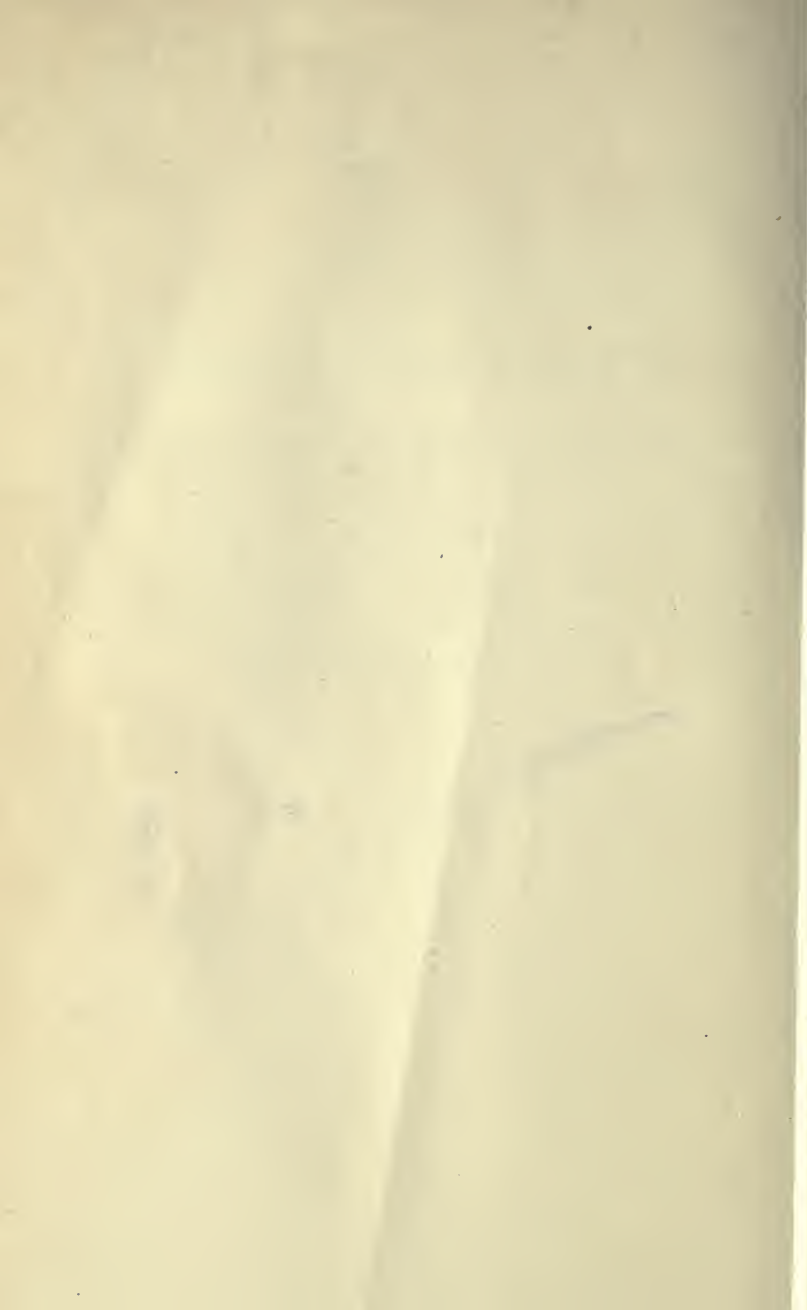
For a long time past, however, 'The Fan' has been, with the exception of 'Mine Hostess,' the best known and most praised of Goldoni's comedies.

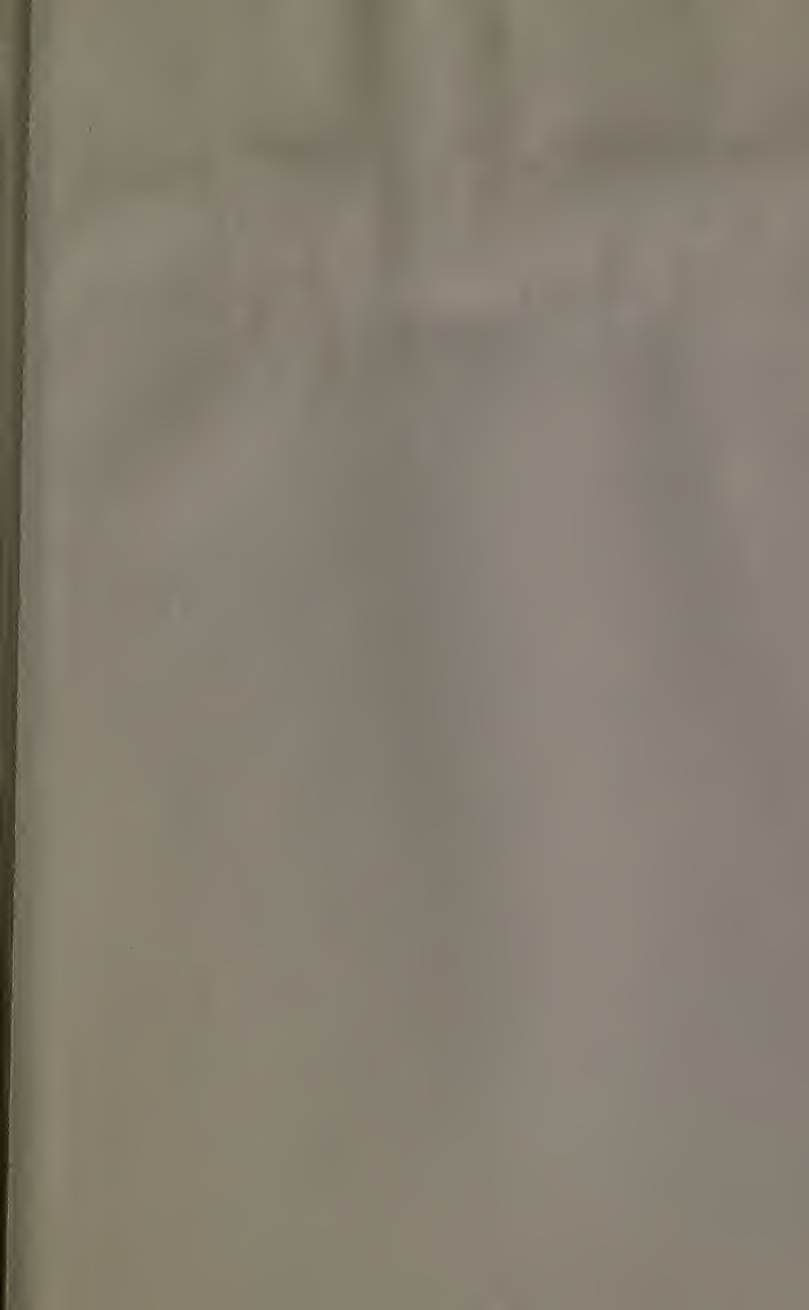


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